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IN ONE VOLUME.

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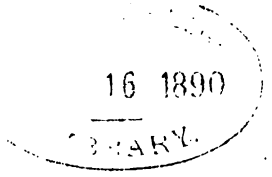

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MEMOIRS OF A FEMME DE CHAMBRE.

CHAPTER I.

We live in an age when to write memoirs is almost as common, if not quite as easy, as to read them. It is the knowledge of this fact that gives me courage to attempt the task I have imposed on myself, and should I fail in executing it, I shall have at least achieved my principal object, that of noting down events from which some moral may be drawn, some warning taken. The sentiments and opinions of a person who has filled only a position generally deemed so subaltern a one, as that of a *Femme de Chambre*, may be considered beneath the notice of grave and highly polished readers; but she who has been brought in close contact and daily association with individuals of her own sex, allowed to possess cultivated minds, and placed in the highest class, must be indeed peculiarly dull and unobservant if she has not profited by such advantages, and has not become able to draw inferences, and to form comments on what she has witnessed. Who will deny that the Memoirs of Madame de Motteville furnish some entertaining and instructive anecdotes and information relative to her royal mistress, Anne of Austria, the suspected wife of Louis XIII.? and without the Memoirs of Madame de Staël, formerly Mademoiselle de Launay, of how many amusing facts connected with her haughty mistress, the Duchess de Maine, should we have remained ignorant? I do not presume to institute any comparison between Mesdames de Motteville, de Staël, and my humble self; far be such vanity from me. I only name them to illustrate a hypothesis which I would fain advance, namely, that no one, not even a parent, a husband,

or the most intimate friend, can have the same opportunities of studying the character, disposition, temper, and peculiarities of a lady, as has her *Femme de Chambre*, who sees not only her *person*, but also her *mind en déshabillé*. Well and truly has it been observed by a clever writer, that no man is a hero to his *Valet de Chambre*. As well, and as truly may it be asserted, that no woman is a heroine to her personal attendant. How interesting then must be the study in the dressing rooms of persons who are seen by the world only in full costume, with their manners as scrupulously got up for the occasion as is their dress, both calculated to produce the most advantageous effect in society, and laid aside when in the privacy of the *chambre de toilette*, that sanctuary, where no concealments can exist. Having, as I hope, established my hypothesis that *Femmes de Chambre* can best know their mistresses, and proved, if I may be permitted to parody two lines of Pope, that

> "They best can paint them,
> Who have dressed then most;"

I will commence by giving some account of myself, for it strikes me that a certain knowledge of an Author is always necessary in order that more confidence should be placed in his or her productions, and more allowance made for their defects.

I am the daughter of a man, who filled for some years the anomalous situation of private secretary, and *sur-intendant de maison*, to a nobleman of large expenditure and small means. I use the word anomalous, because my father possessed all the confidence of his employer, which could be accorded to the most trusted friend; yet, had to perform services which no friend could be charged with, and from which many menials would have recoiled. The well educated secretary, whose province it was to write and copy letters of great importance in more than two languages, his employer holding a high official appointment, had also the painful, and often humiliating task to perform, of soothing angry creditors, conciliating suspicious lenders of money, and making a small sum cover as large a surface of debt, as gold-beaters do their thin

leaf which they draw out to so wonderful an extent. He was an excellent Chancellor of the Exchequer of his needy master, and an adept in the difficult art of keeping up appearances when any one, with less tact, would have let the nakedness of the land be seen. Was a dinner to be given, a ball or concert to be got up, when the funds were so low that no sovereign could be found in Lord Willamere's purse, although his royal Sovereign smiled most graciously on him whenever opportunity offered, Stratford, so was my father named, was told to manage some way or other to *find* money for those who would no longer furnish things on credit, and to *talk over* those who were less obdurate, to add some more items to their already long bills. Musicians and singers, I have often heard him say, were the most unmanageable persons he had to deal with. *They* would insist on ready money, especially those amongst them who had established reputations, and high salaries at the Italian Opera; and these were precisely the persons whom Lord Willamere desired most should perform at his concerts.

Many has been the *Casta Diva*, who in spite of all the honied words addressed to her by *Mons. le Secrétaire*, in order to coax her either to moderate her demands, or to give credit to his Lord for the payment of her extravagant ones, who has uttered refusals in a louder and harsher tone, than was ever ventured on in the most termagant *rôles* before the public, and who has insisted on being paid in advance with gold for her notes.

Many have been the rising singers, whose fame had not yet been stamped by fashion, and who consequently would have been content with a trifling remuneration, who sung at concert after concert at Lord Willamere's without receiving any, lured by the delusive hopes that their names figuring in the papers, as having appeared there, might lead to a command from royalty, or future *paid* engagements. My father dared not reveal to those poor *artistes* how little chance there was of his lord's advancing their interests; or how tenacious he was of never interfering in the patronage of those appointed to

arrange concerts at "the Castle at Windsor," or at "the Palace;" yet it pained him to permit them to remain in error, and to see them incurring expense they could but ill afford, in order to be well-dressed at Lord Willamere's concerts, whenever the *prima donnas* of the day inexorably refused to sing at them. Lenders of money were lured to grant loans, by hopes held out of good situations to be procured for their relations; and creditors were soothed by similar promises. My Lord Willamere, too, was a bachelor, exceedingly good-looking, and with very captivating manners, two advantages, which, joined to his high rank and fashion, led all those interested in his welfare to believe that he must inevitably marry some rich heiress, whose wealth would enable him to pay off all his debts. Hence, never did one of those poor victims, almost always sought for their gold, appear in the metropolis, that she was not selected by the creditors of Lord Willamere as his bride, and each of these delusive hopes was the cause of a prolongation of their patience, and of his lordship's bills.

The suavity of his manner, and easiness of his temper, had attached his secretary to Lord Willamere; and although he saw much to censure in the reckless extravagance of his employer, and his utter carelessness of the sufferings, or ruin of those who trusted him, he nevertheless had so fascinated my father that he would have made any sacrifice rather than abandon him.

The secretary often accompanied his lord to Altonbury Castle, the seat of the marquis of that name, who had married Lord Willamere's only sister. He there saw my mother, who was a governess to Lady Altonbury's children, became captivated by her beauty and gentleness, and, after a courtship of some length, protracted by the consciousness of their mutual poverty, and state of dependence, and the dread of entailing increased difficulties on each other, they, hopeless of any amelioration in their circumstances, took the desperate step of marrying. My mother, like her husband, was an orphan with no near relations, so there was no one to consult on the step they were about — no one to warn them of its

consequences. Lord Willamere, who felt he could not do without my father, made a merit of necessity, and told him, when the approaching event was announced to him, that if he was *determined* to marry a portionless bride, an act of folly, however, which he most gravely counselled him against, he would grant his sanction to his bringing his wife to Willamere House. Mrs. Stratford might make herself useful in superintending the domestic arrangements, and checking the imposition of the housekeeper and housemaids; nay, as Lady Altonbury had informed him she wrote a fine hand, and was a proficient in French, German, and Italian, she might be made serviceable in copying out the foreign correspondence. My father's poverty left him no alternative, and my mother entered on a life of painful dependence, with all the humiliation, but not the salary, of a servant.

My father's was indeed a laborious and unhappy life. The only son of a poor curate, who half-starved himself to send him to college, and who only lived long enough to see him become a good scholar, the poor young man found himself wholly dependent on those in the college who could speak personally of his character and acquirements. Through the recommendation of one of these, a man of considerable influence, he entered the house of Lord Willamere, fully convinced that one who held so high an official appointment could not fail to have an opportunity of remunerating his services: and faithfully and conscientiously he determined they should be fulfilled, trusting that he might eventually look forward to some situation offering a modest competency. Too inexperienced to name a salary for his services, he went on from year to year, receiving now and then, sums of ten pounds, as instalments of the allowance, the precise amount of which had never been specified; the receipt of which small payments, however, he had always carefully noted, calculating on deducting them from the gross amount he was to have whenever a day of reckoning came. This so much wished-for day, however, never arrived. Lord Willamere never had a moment's time to look into his own personal or household

expenditure, much less to come to a settlement with his secretary; and the delicacy of sentiment of the said secretary, added to his perfect knowledge of the many claims on his lord, and the very small means for meeting even a quarter of them, prevented his urging his own interests, or even reminding his employer of the pecuniary embarrassments in which he continually found himself. If Lord Willamere ever bestowed a thought on the position of his secretary, — and it is doubtful if he ever found time for it, so occupied was he in finding expedients to meet the difficulties of his own, — he probably consoled himself by thinking that "Stratford could rub on some way or another. *His* tradesmen would certainly give credit to *his* secretary, the person through whom all *his* payments were made. Yes, Stratford was sure to get on; and then, persons like him could live for so little, that *they* could not be exposed to the annoyances that attend men of high rank with fortunes inadequate to meet the demands entailed by their station."

Those with large establishments are more disposed to underrate, than overrate, the pecuniary wants of persons in subordinate situations. They seldom reflect that regularity in payments, so essential to the well-being of all classes, becomes doubly necessary to those with limited means; and that no degree of economy, however scrupulously exercised, can ward off the ruinous results of an ill-paid income.

Obliged to be almost constantly in Willamere House, to be ready to attend his lord's summons, it was deemed expedient that my father should reside altogether there. His repasts, and he took care that they should be as frugal as possible, were furnished in the mansion by a *fille de cuisine*, whose skill in the culinary department he rarely taxed more than in the cooking of a couple of mutton chops or a beefsteak with some potatoes; and his solitary meals were any thing but luxurious or cheerful. They who bask in the sunshine of fortune, with enjoyments courting them on every side, can form but a faint notion of the intensity with which the poor and lonely cherish affection, that first cordial drop in

the bitter cup of life, which has cheered, and made them forget its former unpalatableness. To be no longer a solitary being on earth, unloved, uncared for, wearing away existence in the monotonous routine of uninteresting duties, is almost to be happy; but to be warmly, fondly loved, and by a creature, too, gifted with no common mind, as well as no ordinary share of beauty and accomplishment, was indeed bliss. No wonder, then, that my father forgot his dependent state, his contracted means, prudence — every thing — but that he loved, and was beloved; and without a home, however humble, which he could call his own, wedded; and, by Lord Willamere's permission, brought his bride to Willamere House.

His lordship had never been so much struck with her beauty, as when on his return home a few days after his secretary's marriage, he presented himself in the small sitting room assigned for her use, to offer his congratulations, and express his hope that she would make herself at home and comfortable. There are many men who never think of sin till an opportunity of committing it with facility, if not with impunity, seems to be afforded to them. "Egad," thought Lord Willamere, as he left the meanly furnished and small room inhabited by my mother, "I never remarked how very handsome Stratford's wife is before. I know no woman in the society in which I live, who is half so beautiful. The fellow has devilish good taste, I must acknowledge. My libertine friends will congratulate me on having so fair an inmate, and all my denials will never convince them that *I* had nothing to say to arranging this marriage, or that I do not feel a more than common interest in Mrs. Stratford. — And, by Jove, it will be very difficult *not* to feel a more than ordinary interest in her. Having so pretty a woman thrown in one's way, as it were, brought into my very house, and without any contrivance whatever of mine; yes, the temptation might prove too strong for a wiser man than I am, where a beautiful woman is in question, and I fear will be too great for me. Well, Stratford must blame himself if any thing should happen. It

will be his own fault for bringing her into my house. However innocent our acquaintance may be, the goodnatured world will be sure to think the reverse, and Mrs. Stratford's reputation will suffer as much, as if she were blameable; and, *après tout*, when a woman's reputation *is* injured, I don't see why *I* need be so scrupulous of seeking the good fortune for which I shall be sure to have the credit! I am tired of the Duchess. She really is so *overloving*, so *exigeante*, that a jealous wife of my own could not be more *ennuiyeuse* than this wife of my friend. Yet, hang me if I would not rather injure any man of my acquaintance than poor Stratford. He is so gentleman-like in his feelings, so refined in his habits, and so delicate about asking for money. I almost wish he had not thrown this temptation in my way.

"What fools married men are! They always lay the foundation of their wives' fall. Look at every trial occasioned by conjugal infidelity, and one will find that it was the husband who established between some one of his dissolute friends, and his wife, the most dangerous of all habits, that of allowing him to become *l'ami de la maison*, whose daily visits and constant attendance have often brought the lady's name into disrepute before aught more than appearances could be urged against her. The poor woman finds herself the town talk before she dreamt of evil. The foolish husband, convinced of the innocence of his wife, and the sincerity of his friend, vows that *he* will not be bullied by the world into breaking off an intimacy that has become necessary to his comfort. The wife's mind, by slow, perhaps, but by sure degrees, gets accustomed to the notion of having her name coupled with Lord A, or Mr. B. Lord A or Mr. B begins to think it a folly to let the world talk without cause, and *opportunity*, that bane to virtue, leads from imaginary to real guilt.

"O ye unhappy husbands! knew ye your danger as we bachelors and *hommes de bonnes fortunes* do, how would ye eschew permitting such dangerous intimacies beneath your roofs! How would ye shun the insidious friend, who begins by making himself agreeable to both husband and wife, by

breaking the monotony of their conjugal *tête-à-têtes*, and ends by destroying every vestige of affection between them.

"But here I am moralizing on the fate of husbands in general, even while meditating an injury on one in particular. Strange folly, is it not, that men who as bachelors have had personal experience of the consequences which too frequently result from the weakness of husbands in exposing their wives to temptation, should fall precisely into the same error when they become Benedicts? This does seem strange and unaccountable! but the cause may be traced to the want of reason men betray in the selection of their wives. They marry only for beauty, or for fortune. The beauty is loved and treated, for a short time, as a mistress, then slighted as a wife. Her society becomes irksome, her consciousness of the change in her husband's feelings, — and few have the delicacy or kindness to conceal such changes, — wounds and offends her; reproaches, sullenness, or low spirits ensue. His home is no longer agreeable, and he is glad to call in the aid of some pleasant friend, to render it less intolerable. One folly leads to another, until the husband rushes into a court of law, to have an evaluation made by twelve honest men, of the loss he has sustained in his wife's affection and society, both of which he was, in all probability, heartily tired of; or, if more patient and enduring, he submits to his fate without seeking redress from the law, he must be content with being pointed at, poor easy man, as a fool, who is imposed on, or as a wretch who connives at the guilt of his wife, and his own dishonour.

"It is this knowledge of life, that is, life in the world in which I live, that has caused me to be a Bachelor at — Hang it, I hate to mention the precise age at which I have arrived. I certainly don't look so old," and Lord Willamere glanced complacently at himself in the glass. "I wish my hair did not get so thin about the temples. I have tried every balm, oil, and pomatum ever advertised in the newspapers, but I find no advantage from them. What a strange fancy the old tyrant Time has for hair! I suppose he mistakes it for hay,

and so mows it with the scythe, with which he is always represented."

Such were the cogitations of Lord Willamere on the day he paid his secretary's wife his first visit. If any of our readers should question how we became acquainted with the said cogitations, questions which we warn them are always considered by Authors as unpolite as if in society some one inquired how certain facts just stated, and supposed to be known only by individuals equally interested in not revealing them, came to be known — we inform them once for all, that historians, biographers, and novelists, are endowed with a peculiar faculty, denied to others — that of knowing what passes in the minds of the characters they portray. How else should grave historians be able to give us not only the words of kings, heroes, and statesmen, uttered in the privacy of their chambers, to ministers, generals, and secretaries, who have never been even suspected of betraying their confidence, but even the thoughts known only to themselves? Having now, as we hope, established our right to the privilege we claim of making our readers acquainted with the secret thoughts and reflections of the characters we attempt to delineate, we trust we may henceforth continue to unroof the heads of our personages, and display what passes in them, as Asmodeus did the roofs of houses, without being further questioned as to our means of acquiring information, and that our readers will take for granted all we write. In this confidence we leave them at the close of this, our first chapter, meaning in the second to let them see the result of Lord Willamere's cogitations.

CHAPTER II.

Had Lord Willamere followed the dictates of his inclinations, his first visit to the wife of his secretary would have been quickly followed up by a second; but the prudence instigated by a consciousness of his own evil intentions, whispered the necessity of allowing some days to elapse before he

presented himself again in her apartment. My father felt rather flattered than surprised when informed of the courtesy of his employer; and, good easy man! received it as a proof of the respect entertained for himself. But when, a few days after, Lord Willamere proposed that he and Mrs. Stratford should dine with him, and urged it so strongly that he knew not how to refuse, a doubt, for the first time, crossed his mind whether it would be correct to bring his wife to the table of Lord Willamere, without the presence of any other lady to sanction it.

"Surely," said the Earl, observing his hesitation to accept the invitation, "you, my dear Stratford, who have been for so many years domesticated, as it were, here and who have so often dined *tête-à-tête* with me, cannot let any false notions of etiquette or ceremony prevent your wife from making a trio at my table? Were you, my good fellow, to ask me to make a third with you and *madame* at dinner, in your apartment, there could surely be no impropriety in my accepting it. Where, then, can be the difference in you and her dining with me in mine?"

Although this sophistry did not convince the secretary, it embarrassed him, and not knowing how to get out of the dilemma in which he found himself placed by it, he accepted the invitation.

"I wish you had declined it, my dear," said my mother, "for I don't think it either prudent or proper that I should dine at Lord Willamere's table without any other woman. You know I had a great objection to becoming an inmate in the house of a single man, and that only your prayers that our union should no longer be protracted, and the impossibility of our scanty means furnishing us a lodging elsewhere, induced me to consent to a measure which, could it be avoided, I would repudiate."

"Well then, dearest, all I will urge is, that as I foolishly accepted the invitation, do pray for this once accompany me. Lord Willamere seemed to have set his heart on it, and

may be offended if you do not go. There will be no other guests, and henceforth we will decline dining with him."

"I would not have you decline; on the contrary, I wish you to live exactly on the same terms with his lordship as previously to our marriage, when you used to dine with him so often."

"What, and leave you to dine alone, Emily? No; that I could not bring myself to do."

And the fond husband pressed the delicate form of his wife to his heart, and she, unwilling to refuse any request of his, silenced the pleading of her own better judgment, and consented to dine with his lordship. The air of embarrassment and timidity with which she entered the library, betrayed to Lord Willamere that my mother was an unwilling guest there; and with all the tact peculiar to a well-bred man, and above all, one who had deeply studied woman, he instantly endeavoured to re-assure her, by the respectful manner in which he welcomed her. Had she been a person of the most exalted rank, he could not have evinced a more deferential tone towards her; and many were the ladies of his acquaintance, with high-sounding titles, who would have been surprised had they witnessed how much more respectful was his treatment of his poor secretary's wife, than of themselves. Lord Willamere was one of the most agreeable men of his day, and seldom did he wish to please, that his efforts were not crowned with success. His conversation, at once brilliant and rational, possessed the power of drawing out those with whom he talked; and never did they leave his society without being pleased with him, and satisfied with themselves. Often had my mother, during his frequent visits to his sister, Lady Altonbury, been a delighted listener to the conversation of Lord Willamere, while she presided at the tea-table; but she was forced to admit that he appeared to less advantage there, than while doing the honours of his own; and the delicate tact with which he directed his attention equally to her husband as to herself, flattered while it pleased her. Nevertheless, she could neither vanquish

nor dissemble the constraint, which a consciousness of her being in a false position imposed on her, and never had she appeared less to advantage than on that day, when, entrenched in a more than ordinary degree of reserve, she did little more than assent in monosyllables to the observations of her clever host.

The dessert had only been a few minutes placed on the table, when the abrupt entrance of two gentlemen increased the embarrassment of my mother. Nor did Lord Willamere seem pleased by their presence. Both stared with ill-disguised astonishment at the lady, and this circumstance rendered her still more sensible of the equivocalness of her position. Lord Willamere, with intuitive delicacy, marked her increased embarrassment, as well as the glances of unchecked admiration which his visitors directed towards her. Hoping, however, that they would soon withdraw, he did not at first present them to her; but when they stated that they had dined at the coffee-room at the House of Commons, where they had been detained by a debate, and had come to communicate some political news to him, he was compelled to ask them to sit down and have some wine. "Permit me, Mrs. Stratford, to present to you, Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington," said Lord Willamere. The evident embarrassment and timidity of my mother, while it brought the roses to her cheek, and enhanced her beauty, only served to convince the libertine friends of her host, that the suspicions they had formed to her disadvantage were but too well founded. Each in turn addressed some commonplace observation to her, but her reserved demeanour, and monosyllabic replies, discouraged their advances, although their injurious opinion of her remained unchanged. My mother sate on thorns, and when Lord Willamere asked her advice on some subject connected with furnishing houses, to which the conversation had turned, she, anxious to make known to the strangers her real position, referred to my father, saying, "My husband, my lord, is more conversant with such matters than I am." This speech she expected

would at once remove the surmises to which her presence, *en famille* as it were, at Lord Willamere's table had given rise, — for, that injurious surmises had been formed, she with feminine quickness of apprehension had guessed — but she little knew the men who had formed them, for no sooner had they become acquainted with the fact, that the beautiful woman before them was the wife of their host's secretary, than their prurient imaginations created an attachment between the parties, little creditable to the virtue of the lady or the morals of Lord Willamere. They exchanged glances of intelligence confirmatory of their suspicions, while my poor mother's prophetic spirit quailed as it divined the gross insult which these suspicions offered to her. She longed to leave the room, yet dreaded doing so, lest such a step might betray the fact of her being an inmate at Lord Willamere's, and so render her case still worse in their eyes. For the first time she began to think her husband obtuse, when stealing sundry looks at him expressive of her dissatisfaction, she saw that he appeared wholly unconscious of any cause for such a feeling on her part, and was quietly eating some fruit. Not so careless was Lord Willamere. *He* evinced, by various ways, that he was sensible that she was ill at ease, and that he was pained at her being so. His manner towards her became, if possible, more respectful than before the entrance of his unwelcomed guests; and, when he saw that it failed to reassure her, he proposed ringing to command coffee to be served in the library.

"As this is the first time, Mrs. Stratford, that you have honoured me by your presence here," said he, "I must not permit you to be bored too long in the dining-room. When my sister, Lady Altonbury, comes to town, I hope you will give her and me the pleasure of your company at dinner here often."

There was a considerateness and delicacy in this speech which gratified my mother, although the motive of it was so obvious to her, that she more than ever reproached herself for having been overruled into placing herself in a position

that rendered it necessary. Never previously had she been so sensible of her husband's want of knowledge of the world, and more especially of the *usages du monde*, against which her presence at the table of Lord Willamere, without any other female to countenance it, was a violation, as then, because she had never before seen him placed in any position that called for the exercise of his *savoir vivre*. Bred in a college, and among students who like himself depended solely on their acquirements for future subsistence, he had little time, and no occasion, to become acquainted with the etiquette of society; and his natural goodbreeding had hitherto prevented this want of knowledge of the conventional habits of life, from being noticed. Almost as great a recluse in the house of his patron, as he had been at college, his solitary habits were only broken into by an occasional *tête-à-tête* dinner with Lord Willamere, and an Easter or Christmas visit to his lordship's sister, when he accompanied him in order to be on the spot to carry on the voluminous correspondence that devolved on the man in office. No wonder, then, that he was ignorant of the rules of etiquette, invented to hold society together, and any breach of which is looked on by the supporters of this artificial code as a sin of deeper dye than one involving the most serious consequences. The very frankness and honesty of his nature, joined to the seclusion of his youth in a college, and since then in the house of Lord Willamere, rendered him more unfit than other men for the acquisition of this species of knowledge; and while perfectly capable of giving an epitome of the laws of nations, he might at any hour unconsciously commit a solecism on the puny ones of the artificial circle denominated the fashionable world. It was this ignorance that led him to urge his wife to fulfil the dinner engagement he had accepted for her with Lord Willamere, and which kept him from comprehending the glances of painful embarrassment which from time to time she cast towards him, after the arrival of Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington.

"Dear, good William, his is too fine a nature to suspect

the evils that render a strict observance of the rules of etiquette so necessary in society," thought his fond wife. "It must, therefore, be my duty to guard against any infraction of them, and to avoid, henceforth, those embarrassing positions into which his ignorance of conventional usages might lead me."

"Were you ill, dearest Emily?" inquired my father, when he joined his wife in the library; leaving Lord Willamere to hear the political news which his visitors came to communicate.

"No, not ill, William; only ill at ease, because conscious that I committed a breach in the rules of propriety in dining at Lord Willamere's table. I was mortified that two of his lordship's friends should have become cognizant of the fact, and was covered with confusion at the bare idea of the evil interpretation they would but too probably put on it."

"Surely, Emily, you judge them too severely! What evil could be attributed when I, your husband, was present?"

"Alas, dear William, had you lived, as I have done, in families where *appearances* were as severely judged as crimes, you would not wonder that I felt embarrassed, nay more, positively alarmed, this evening."

Then it was that my mother revealed to her simple-minded husband some of those laws of etiquette of which he had previously been in utter ignorance, and made him a wiser, though not a happier man; for now, aware that his wife's objection to dining at Lord Willamere's table was founded on her sense of propriety, and not, as he had before imagined, from a dislike to society, he felt hurt that a man so well versed in a knowledge of the world as his lordship, should have proposed a step in violation of its usages; and he promised that henceforth he would never urge his Emily to act contrary to her own sense of what was correct.

"You are a devilish lucky dog, Willamere," said Lord Henry Middlecourt to his host, when the door closed after his lordship's secretary.

"I am not aware of any peculiar good luck just now,"

replied Lord Willamere, endeavouring to look as unconscious as possible, although well divining to what good fortune his friend alluded.

"Come, come, don't be so very sly; you know perfectly well that I refer to the luck of your having a secretary with so very handsome a wife, and who is so sociable as to come and dine with you, *en famille*, whenever you wish it."

"You are quite wrong in your conjectures, I can assure you, Middlecourt. Mrs. Stratford never dined with me before, — is a particularly correct woman, and a great favourite with my sister, Lady Altonbury."

"All this we are bound to believe, my dear fellow, the moment you assert it, and more especially with such a grave face. Nevertheless I must still consider you a very lucky man to have so simple-minded a secretary with so handsome a wife; why, he seemed as innocent of his own false position as a child, while his handsome wife betrayed in a thousand ways her overwhelming consciousness of it."

"I really can see nothing false in his position. He has dined with me a hundred times before."

"Yes, when he was a bachelor I suppose; and if you can get him to see no harm in bringing his beautiful wife into your lordship's dangerous company, to enable her to contrast your powers of captivation, allowed by all women to be irresistible, with his simplicity and *manque de savoir vivre*, I must persevere in thinking you a lucky fellow."

"No more of this bantering, Middlecourt; it is out of place, I assure you." And Lord Willamere looked so displeased, that his friend saw it was time to drop the subject. But though he did so, his conviction that a *tendresse* towards the secretary's pretty wife existed on the part of Lord Willamere, remained firm as ever; nay, the very seriousness with which the latter denied it, convinced him still more of the truth of his suspicions.

When Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington walked from Lord Willamere's to their club that night, they renewed the subject of Mrs. Stratford.

"She is either a dragon of prudery, which her presence at Willamere's table would seem to impugn, or else she is afraid of making him jealous, for you saw how cold and reserved she was," said Lord Henry Middlecourt.

"But might we not put a more charitable interpretation on the poor woman's conduct?" observed Mr. Addington. "She may be correct, though not versed in the rules of strict propriety, as her dining with Willamere implies; and she may be in love with her husband, who is a very good-looking fellow—a possibility that never has entered your head, my friend."

Their arrival at their club prevented Mr. Addington offering any other hypothesis in justification of the secretary's wife; but none that he could suggest would have changed the opinion of his companion, who, accustomed to look on the evil side of all pictures, had made up his mind on this subject. Nor did he refrain from communicating it to others. Many were the young *roués* at the club that night to whom he gave an exaggerated account of the snug little party he had broken in upon at Willamere's, exciting in the minds of all a strong desire to see the beautiful Mrs. Stratford, a sentiment of envy at the *bonne fortune* of Willamere, and of contempt for the secretary, whom they set down either as a duped, or an infamous husband conniving at his own dishonour. Thus, while two beings, innocent of even a thought of guilt, and incapable of entertaining one, were quietly and calmly slumbering on their pillows, slander was busy with their names: the pure wife was mentioned as one who might be sought, if not won, by any of the libertines among whom the fame of her beauty was bandied about; and the finger of scorn was ready to be pointed at her honourable minded husband, by men who would have gloried in dishonouring him; and Lord Willamere was considered as a very lucky fellow, much to be envied for this *bonne fortune*. How far from the truth were the suspicions of these libertines! For while they declared Lord Willamere a lucky dog, and circulated among their coteries the report of his supposed *liaison* with his

secretary's wife, that nobleman was devising plans for furnishing excuses for being admitted to her presence, yet so awed by her dignified reserve, that many of those schemes which suggested themselves to his prolific brain, were dismissed in his dread lest their being carried too promptly into execution might alarm or offend her sensitive delicacy. Yet this very delicacy and reserve invested her with new charms. Never previously had he encountered a woman who inspired him with such a dread of incurring her displeasure. Was it possible that she had already divined the sentiments he felt towards her, so guarded too as he had been? To the unlucky and ill-timed visit of Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington, he attributed her extraordinary reserve; and heartily did he wish both these gentlemen in a place not to be named to ears polite, for their *mal-à-propos* visit and its consequences. He felt certain that one, if not both men would give their own version of the dinner party they had broken in on, and that the reputation of Mrs. Stratford would be made the sport of their coteries. He lamented this probability, not from any respect for her character, but from a dread that such reports might not only, by some chance, reach her ears, and so put her still more on her guard, but that they might encourage other pretenders to her favour.

"Fools," thought Lord Willamere, "while they believe me blessed with her affection, I dare not even hint that I aspire to it, lest she should discard me from her presence for ever. What a lovely, what an exquisite creature she is! There is something about her that repels even the slightest approach to familiarity, and makes me feel when near her, that I shall never have courage to tell her I love her. I wish I could get her out of my head—out of my heart, I should have said—for hang me if she has not taken possession of that fortress, which, though often assailed, and with sundry breaches made in it, never before capitulated to a victorious enemy. To think of her lavishing the treasures of her affection on poor simple Stratford, while I would give worlds, if I possessed them, for even the privilege of merely seeing

her every day and being permitted to converse with her. I could not have believed it possible that in so short a time I should have become so madly in love, and with so little prospect too of a return. To see her husband eating his dinner as phlegmatically as if she were not seated opposite to him, while her beautiful face, lovely in all its various expressions, rendered it a difficult task for me to keep my eyes from it even for a moment, or to eat a morsel, was really wonderful. Happy man! *he* is so sure of her affection that he can eat in peace, while the bare idea of ever making her sensible of my passion sends the blood so rapidly to my heart that my pulse throbs and my hand trembles. I can think of nothing but her. The notion that she is beneath my roof, that only a few stairs and a corridor separate us, fires my blood. Vain thought—an impassable gulph divides us. She loves another, and is a virtuous, a chaste woman. Only such can inspire the passion I now feel. Could I hope to vanquish the virtue of the too charming Emily, I should love her less madly than I do; and libertine as I have been, and as I am, she would be less dazzlingly bright, less lovely, were she divested of that purity, which, like a veil, shades, but conceals not her beauty, giving a winning grace to it. Then the absence of all coquetry, all desire to please, how it enhances her attractions! If women did but know how much more they captivate us by not seeking to do so, and how irresistible a charm virtue lends them, how few would become our victims, and have to deplore their own credulity and our falsehood!"

Such were the reflections that filled the mind of the enamoured Lord Willamere, as he reclined on his sleepless couch, tortured by the pangs of a hopeless passion.

CHAPTER III.

Lord Willamere allowed four days to pass over after the dinner described in our former chapter, before he ventured again to present himself at the door of the little sitting-

room occupied by the wife of his secretary. How often during those four days, which seemed to him of interminable length, had he been tempted to break through the restrictions his prudence had imposed on him, and to seek the presence of her who now occupied all his thoughts. But a dread of alarming her by his too frequent visits deterred him; and he imagined that a forbearance which cost him so many struggles merited the reward of a less cold reception than he had previously experienced. The four days which had appeared to creep so slowly, and to be of such interminable length to him, had glided so rapidly by with Mrs. Stratford, that, when he sent to inquire if she were at home, his visit struck her as following so quickly on the heels of his former one, that a sense of its impropriety brought the blush of wounded delicacy to her cheek.

"Present my respects to his lordship, and say that I am so particularly engaged that I cannot receive visitors," said she to the servant.

The message had so powerful an effect on the nerves of Lord Willamere, that he positively grew red and then pale, as he reflected on it. How cold, how cutting! nay, how insolent was such treatment of *him*,—and in his own house too! And for the nonce Lord Willamere forgot that the very circumstance which added to his displeasure on this occasion, namely, his visit being refused *in his own house*, ought to have pleaded against his entertaining any project hostile to the honour or peace of those who so far confided in him as to become its inmates. He forgot the gross breach of hospitality, and of honour he meditated, and with a meanness unworthy of a gentleman, presumed that the very circumstance which ought to have rendered Mrs. Stratford sacred in his eyes, should have induced a more respectful deference to his proposed courtesy. Then it occurred to him that she might be unwell, or perhaps in an undress in which she did not wish to be seen. Yes, it must be so, and *he* had been wrong in blaming her for declining his visit. The wife of a poor secretary could not be expected to be always dressed in

a style fit to receive visitors of distinction, like *les grandes dames* of his acquaintance, and allowance must be made for Mrs. Stratford. He longed to inquire after her health when he entered the bureau where her husband was writing, but an embarrassment unusual to him, which, whether proceeding from a consciousness of his own evil intentions, or a dread of awakening the suspicions of his secretary, checked the inquiry as it rose to his lips, and he felt, for the first time, ill at ease with Stratford.

When he rode out in the afternoon, and passed a certain nursery in the environs of London, no less remarkable for the beauty of the *bouquets* sold there than for the extravagance of the prices demanded for them, he omitted not to purchase one for the lady of his thoughts, and as he threw down the guinea asked for it, he forgot that the said guinea was one of the last remaining in his purse from a loan effected some ten days before on the reasonable terms of fifty per cent; nay more, he remembered not that the poor secretary's wife for whom this superfluous luxury was intended, might, from his backwardness in paying the services of her husband, be in want of many of the comforts, if not necessaries of life. *He* thought only of marking his attention by a delicate gift that might remind the receiver of the donor, and as he had the fragrant *bouquet* enveloped in paper, and confided to the hands of his groom, he only wished that he might have the pleasure of presenting it in person to the lady for whom it was designed.

"I have now, my lord, some very rare and fine specimens of the flowers your lordship has so often asked for," said the nursery-man.

"I do not require any at present," was the reply; but a whole history of man's inconstancy was comprised in it.

"There's really no knowing what to make of these great folk," observed the nursery-man to his wife, when having seen Lord Willamere gallop off, he entered the little parlour in which she was seated at her work. "Why it was only a month ago that my Lord Willamere used to come here con-

tinually asking for that new species of heart's-ease, and saying he would give any price for it, and now, when I have taken such pains to get it, and expected to be well paid for my trouble, he tells me he doesn't require it. I suppose as how the lady he wanted it for, has now some fresh fancy."

"It's more likely, Thomas, that *his lordship* has some fresh fancy. Ah! you men, you men. I often think that one might guess the changes in these fine gentlemen's hearts, by the changes in their orders for flowers. One time they're mad for some particular flower, and will be satisfied with no other, because, as every fool might know, the lady who is the favourite for the time, likes that best. Then some other flower is wanted, and only that will do."

"But, mayhap, Mary, that it isn't the fault of the men, but the women. Your sex are so changeable, that one day you like one flower, and the next another."

"No, Thomas, it's no such thing, we always prefer the flower we liked best when we were in love. Don't I always prefer the moss-rose above all other flowers? and don't you remember how you used to bring me one every Sunday while they were in bloom, and I used to keep it in water, and sigh when it faded? Ah! how well I remember those days! But I am sure that there is always some new love in the case when these fine gentlemen ask for a new flower. Do you remember how many *bouquets* of small forget-me-not, this same Lord Willamere used to send to that grand house in Grosvenor Square, during one season? Then the prices he used to pay, a few weeks ago, for heart's-ease to send to Belgrave Square! Ah! I warrant me the poor lady there, may want heart's-ease now for what *he* cares about the matter, for there's a new fancy in his mind, I'll be sworn."

"Well, well, Mary, that's no business of ours. We must hear, see, and say nothing. But I often think to myself, that if husbands wanted to find out their wives' secrets, they might discover 'em by going round to our green-houses. They'd then learn the prices, and mayhap the buyers, of the rare flowers their ladies have every day, and that would make 'em

open their eyes. What husband, except during the honey-moon, would pay such sums for particular flowers as many a gentleman pays here?"

"Yes, Thomas, it's all very true, and ladies might also find out, when those for whom they sometimes lose honour, and risk shame and disgrace, are playing 'em false, by inquiring at our green-houses, what flowers are now bought by certain gentlemen, and where they are sent to?"

"It's all the better for our trade, Mary, that such questions are seldom asked, or if asked, that we are too cute to answer 'em."

"It sometimes makes me sad, Thomas, to think that such innocent things as flowers should be used for sinful purposes. Sure their delicate colours, lovely bloom, and fragrant scent, ought to remind one of the Giver of all good, who has yielded them to please us, and ought to chase evil thoughts away. But, forgetful of this, these beautiful things, that live but for a day, are sent to breathe secret but evil thoughts, where sometimes a letter dare not be sent or a visit paid, and they turn to be the messengers of sin and do the work of corruption. Little does a husband think, when he sees a fine nosegay on the table of his handsome wife, or in her bosom, or held with pleasure to her nose, that it speaks to her as plainly, but more secretly than words could do, of some false friend, whom he has received into his house, and who is planning his dishonour."

"You're always for going to the end of things, Mary, and you remind me of what you read out of the book one day about seeing sermons in stones. For you'd make a sermon out of flowers, and spoil our trade into the bargain."

"No Thomas, I wouldn't, but I'd let no man, were I a gentleman, give a nosegay to my wife. I'd have only gentlemen going to be married or wishing to be so, have the privilege of sending nosegays to those they have proposed for, and then flowers would be looked on as the messengers of honest, lawful love, instead of sinful."

"Lord love your simple heart, Mary, if that was the case we nurserymen would starve."

When Lord Willamere's *bouquet* was sent to Mrs. Stratford, she was half tempted to return it; but the fear of having the appearance of attaching too much importance to so trifling a gift, and of exciting the remarks of his Lordship's servants, deterred her. For the first time, the sight and perfume of these beautiful offsprings of summer failed to give her pleasure, for, though a passionate admirer of flowers, — and those sent to her were peculiarly fine — they were associated in her mind with the humiliating consciousness that the donor entertained towards her sentiments less accordant with the respect due to a virtuous woman, to which she thought herself entitled, than with the insolent freedom adopted by libertines to women, who by their levity had encouraged such advances.

Sterne, no mean judge of the female heart, has said, "that a man has seldom an offer of kindness to make to a woman, without her having a presentiment of it some moments before;" and we would maintain that no married woman, however pure and innocent, has ever had the misfortune — and a serious one it may be deemed — of inspiring a passion in the breast of a man, without suspecting it, even before he has presumed to make the guilty avowal. Let no woman therefore — at least no woman with the quick sense of propriety, peculiar to every one of the sex before being tainted by a contact with the demoralized — plead in extenuation for having her ear insulted by a declaration of unhallowed passion, that "it came unexpectedly on her, that she was not prepared for it;" assertions too often had recourse to by coquettes, whose love of admiration had led them to give a tacit encouragement to such avowals; yet whose prudence induced them to shrink back, alarmed at the precipice on whose edge they found themselves trembling. Let them remember the verse which truly says,

"He comes too near, who comes to be denied;"

and be convinced that although a woman may retain sufficient

virtue to repel a seducer, she has lost a portion of her purity and dignity in having permitted a declaration of love.

Looking on the flowers before her as a tacit avowal of a more than common interest in seeking to please her, Mrs. Stratford determined not to retain them. But how were they to be disposed of? She reflected for a few minutes, and, no other plan suggesting itself, she opened the casement of her bedroom and flung the *bouquet* from it. She felt more at ease when it had disappeared, yet she wished that Lord Willamere could know, without her having the ungracious task of informing him, how unvalued had been his gift, and how unwelcome would be any future one. How little did she imagine that the very step she had adopted, had accomplished this wish of hers!

Lord Willamere had gone to his stables, — an unusual occurrence with him — to be present while a veterinary surgeon examined the foot of a favourite horse which had met with an accident, and was returning to his house across the leads at the back of it, when the *bouquet* lying before him attracted his eyes. Was it possible that a gift of *his* had been thus scornfully rejected? Yet it must be so. It was the identical one which an hour before he had sent to Mrs. Stratford, the windows of whose bed-chamber looked out on the leads! Could it have been her husband who in a fit of jealousy had flung them away? There was a salve to his vanity in this supposition, and men always are disposed to believe what most gratifies their besetting foible. Yes, it *must* be that uxorious fool Stratford who threw them away — Mrs. Stratford *had* accepted them, consequently *she* was not likely to have done the deed. Nevertheless, to put an end to all misgivings, he went to the bureau where his secretary was writing, and there sate that individual intent on his occupation, and with a pile of neatly filled pages of *précis* writing, that proved he had not abandoned his task during his lordship's absence. "You have worked hard to-day, Stratford," observed Lord Willamere.

"Yes, my lord, rather, for I have not quitted my desk since the morning."

"The devil you have not!" thought my lord; "it was she then after all who threw away the flowers! She really provokes me into a perseverance of my efforts to vanquish her prudery, even though I may not prove successful. Had she been as willing to commence a flirtation with me as three parts of the women I meet in society are, I should probably have not felt half so strong a desire to make an impression on her as I now do; but, to be foiled by an obscure governess, the wife too of my secretary, and under my own roof, would be too bad. I should for ever lose my reputation as a *homme des bonnes fortunes*, a reputation now so long and triumphantly sustained; ay, *so long* — there's the devil of it; perhaps it is because I am not so youthful as I was, that I am thus scornfully treated."

And Lord Willamere sighed, and cast a melancholy glance in the small mirror that hung near his desk. How frequently had that same glass showed him the reflection of his own face, when meditating, or flushed with conquest, he had contemplated it with complacency, while latterly, and more especially now, it revealed to him the ravages of the ruthless tyrant Time, denoted by locks besprent with silver; and, oh! how much fewer, and further between, than some summers before; and certain harsh lines around his eyes, vulgarly but expressively denominated crow's-feet. His complexion, too, had somewhat "fallen into the sere and yellow leaf," and the muscles extending from the cheeks to the chin came out in an *alto relievo*, by no means desirable for a man who still had pretensions to disturb the peace of female hearts.

Yet this humiliating contemplation of his own altered appearance, far from discouraging him to persevere in his attempts to conquer the affections of Mrs. Stratford, only served to pique his vanity into achieving it. Yes, he would prove, that he was still, though a less handsome, quite as dangerous a man as ever; and he who had vanquished so

many high-born dames, would not have the mortification of being defeated by a mere nobody, who, though certainly extremely beautiful, could not be a conquest to make any sensation in society. *A-propos*, of high-born dames, he remembered that he had in his pocket an unopened letter from the Duchess of Rosehampton. He had received it some hours before, when on the point of mounting his horse to go and buy the *bouquet* for her who had so scornfully flung it away, and had ever since forgotten it as completely as its writer. "Full of reproaches, I dare say," thought he, as he now opened the billet, embossed with a ducal coronet in gold and redolent with perfume. "Yes, the old story: where have I been? what have I been doing? and why has she not seen, or heard from me? 'Time was when I counted the hours that kept me from her, but now — not even a *bouquet* for three whole days.' Yes, yes, the old story," thought Lord Willamere, as he tore the billet into atoms, "'Time *was*,' so they all say. How many billets with the same reproaches have I not received. By Jove! one might imagine all were written by the same hand, so precisely similar are they. It is odd, that, with so much imagination, women should not possess the power of varying their phrases on such occasions, instead of always writing the self-same reproaches.

"The poor duchess! I wish I had thought of buying her some heart's-ease to day; she needs it, if I may trust her letter. The fellow, too, reminded me that he had procured some. But how the devil can a man remember to buy a *bouquet* for one woman, when his whole thoughts are occupied by another? I am half tempted to send her the one so scornfully rejected by her rival: but, no, that won't do, for she is so quick-sighted that she would instantly divine that it was designed for some one else, so I must not increase the jealousy that I see by her letter is already awakened in her breast. The poor duchess! I could really pity her, when I remember how passionately, how madly I once loved her, making her believe, ay, by Jove! and believing myself also at the time, that our love was to endure for ever! But what is a

poor devil of a fellow to do, when satiety and indifference take the place of passion, the never-failing result of a successful one? Of all ghosts, defend me from the ghost of departed love, which haunts one, to scare away the hopes and joys that usher in a new attachment. Well, I suppose I must call on the poor duchess. It will be some consolation for the wound just inflicted on my *amour propre* by Mrs. Stratford, to see one of the most admired of our aristocratic beauties, and the leader of fashion too, pale from anxiety occasioned by my absence, and delighted to see me again. Poor duchess! how many men envy me your smiles, and would give half their possessions to exchange places with me in your favour, while I, for three whole days, have forgotten your existence, and am only reminded of it by a letter filled with tender reproaches? Willamere, Willamere, you're a sad dog!" and here the coxcomb again glanced in the mirror; "how many women's hearts have you not vanquished, while the stupid world believed you were engaged only on protocols, and defeating the tactics of foreign diplomatists? Oh! the relief of flying from the dry details of official duty, to the elegant boudoir, redolent of perfume, of some lovely creature, fierce and haughty to every man save yourself; in whose presence one can forget the wily arts of contemporary political opponents, and the crooked policy of other nations! Yes, I flatter myself, that I have shone in the cabinet as well as in the boudoir," and Lord Willamere drew up his head, and arranged his well-tied neckcloth. "People are mistaken, when they fancy that a handsome man, and a well-dressed one too, seldom makes a good man of business. I have proved the fallacy of this opinion, and I defy any one to say that while indulging in *affaires de cœur* I have neglected *les affaires de tête.*"

CHAPTER IV.

"MAY I claim a few moments of your lordship's time?" asked Lord Willamere's secretary, with a timid and embarrassed air, when *tête-à-tête* next day with his employer.

"Certainly, certainly," was the answer; but his lordship's countenance betrayed some confusion as he seated himself.

"The creditors, my lord, have been very clamorous of late, and threaten to put executions into the house."

"You have told them, I suppose, that such a step would be unavailing?" replied Lord Willamere, his countenance assuming its usual expression of dignified calmness. The truth was, he feared Mr. Stratford was about to speak to him on a subject that interested him infinitely more than his debts, namely, the wife of the said secretary; for the old proverb, "a guilty conscience needs no accuser," was verified in his case, and his equanimity became restored when he found that it was only about his creditors that he was to be spoken to.

"Yes, my lord, I told them that your furniture, plate, books, &c., were assigned over to another creditor. They then declared their intention of seizing your carriages and horses, when I assured them that both were jobbed; on which they got very angry, and said they would at least endeavour to annoy your lordship by exposure, for they would have executions, and seizures made, and afterwards try the cases in court."

"This, Stratford, would, I confess, be anything but agreeable. You must see these harpies again: temporise with them if you can; if not, we must raise some more money by bills, a thing I don't like if it can be avoided."

"It is a ruinous system, my lord, and as likely eventually to lead to exposure as the measure it is meant to prevent."

"Well, see what you can do with these people, Stratford; talk them over, promise them that in a year, or, if that will not do, six months, they shall be paid."

"I have so often held out promises never realized, that they no longer put faith in what I say;" and Stratford changed colour at the consciousness of having not only lost the respect of Lord Willamere's creditors, but his own too, by having deluded them with false promises.

"Something must turn up," resumed his Lordship, "in the

course of the next six months to enable me to pay a portion at least, of the debts, to these troublesome people."

"Ay, so you have said every six months of the last seven years," thought his secretary, "and with no better prospect of the realization of such unfounded hope than at present." But he did not give utterance to this thought, for his was too delicate a mind to add to his patron's annoyances by aught like a reproach. Again, Lord Willamere arose to depart, and once more his secretary begged him to stay for a few minutes, but this time the request was made with much more diffidence and embarrassment of manner than before. "If not *very* inconvenient to your lordship, might I solicit some money on my own account? As a married man, I have more occasion for money than formerly."

"Very true, my good Stratford; and *your* wants must be the first attended to. But at this moment I happen to be poorer than usual. I can only spare you ten pounds; but in a few days you shall have more."

His lordship gave a cheque on his banker for the money, rather wincing while he did so, as the recollection crossed his mind, that only a few pounds more of his remained in the said banker's hands, and that his next quarter's salary was already half anticipated. "If my time were not so wholly occupied by official business and *affaires de cœur*," thought he, as he drove in his cabriolet to the Duchess of Rosehampton's, "I should be hipped to death by my pecuniary embarrassments. By Jove! they are enough to torment a man out of his senses if he had time to think of them. Luckily for me I have not, so the *onus* falls on Stratford. I wish he had not taken my ten pounds just now, though, for he has scarcely left me a sovereign for my *menus plaisirs*, *A-propos* of sovereigns, what a blessing it is to have one, — not the golden effigy, though that in the plural number, to a large amount, is not to be found fault with; but a *bonâ fide* sovereign of flesh and blood, requiring ministers, ay, and paying them well too, through the assistance of Parliament, making them feel satisfied when every quarter-day comes round, if they are so on no other."

Here his lordship's soliloquy was stopped by his arrival at Rosehampton House. He threw the reins on the splash board of the cabriolet, while his diminutive cab boy ran to the horse's head, which even on tiptoes he could scarcely reach, and his master, descending from the vehicle, ascended the steps.

An accurate observer might have noticed that there was much less elasticity in his step, and much less animation in his countenance, than on former visits to this mansion, and these symptoms might have revealed the state of his feelings towards its noble mistress.

"Well, I see'd a funny thing this 'ere day, William," said Lord Willamere's upper house-maid to his lordship's groom, as they met in the servants' hall to have a sociable cup of tea together, on the evening of the day that the *bouquet* had been bought at the nursery garden.

"And what did you see, Hannah?"

"Why, I see'd his lordship pick up as fine a nosegay as ever I looked upon in all my born days, as he was a crossing the leads coming in from the stable; and, what 's more, I see'd Mrs. Stratford, not five minutes before, throw the same nosegay out of her window. I can't be sworn that I see'd her face, but I see'd her hand, and a precious small white vone it is for the matter of that, as it pitched the flowers out. Thinks I to myself, you might give them 'ere flowers to a poor servant, if how be it you did not like to keep 'em yourself, instead of throwing 'em out on the leads to be spoilt; but when I see's his Lordship pick them up and carry them into the house, marry come up, says I, you might have sent my lord the nosegay civilly, and not throw 'em out of the window to fall in his way. Some people are so handsome, that they think other people must be sure to admire 'em, and be glad to pick up the flowers they throw out of the window; but I knows what I knows, and I 'm no blinder than others; and when some people are asked to dine with lords, just for all the world as if they were born ladies instead of only being governesses, it is not for nothing I'm certain."

"How your tongue does run on, Hannah, to be sure, twen-

ty-four to the dozen at least. Why, my lord bought a nosegay at the nursery-man's to-day; and, what's more, paid a golden sovereign for it, for I saw him pull it out of his waistcoat pocket and throw it down on the counter; and moreover, I thought to myself, it's no wonder we poor servants can't get our wages, when our masters give a sovereign for a nosegay."

"Lord! William, you don't say so! Is it possible that any one would give twenty shillings, a whole month of my wages, for a few flowers?"

"Little you know, Hannah, what lords and gentlemen will do when the fancy takes them; Lord help you, they think no more of money than of dust."

"Ay, William, and that's the reason that so many of 'em comes to want it. But what became of the nosegay his lordship bought?"

"I brought it home wrapped up in paper and handed it at the door to the porter."

"And I took it from the porter, and carried it with his lordship's compliments to Mrs. Stratford," said a footman who had heard the conversation between the house-maid and groom.

"Then as sure as day," exclaimed William, "it was the nosegay my lord sent her that she threw out of the window."

"You may be sure," said the footman, "for I noticed that she did not seem much pleased with the present, for she hesitated a minute before she took it from my hands; and looked as if she had more than half a mind to send it back."

"Well, the himperance of some people! where will it stop? Throw a nosegay that cost twenty shillings, and was sent her by a lord; and her husband's master, and hers too, as a body may say, out of the window! She ought to be ashamed of herself!"

"Perhaps she wished to show his lordship that she cared neither for him or his nosegay," remarked Thomas, the footman. "And that's my hopinion, for I saw, the day she dined with my Lord, that he was continually looking at her; and

well he might for the matter of that, for a handsomer face, or a more heleganter figure I have seldom see'd."

"Then you must have been blind, Mr. Thomas," exclaimed Hannah with warmth, "for, to my thinking, Mrs. Stratford is anything but ansome. Why she has no more colour in her cheeks than a white rose with just a little pink shade in the middle; and her eyelashes are so long, that one can hardly see the colour of her eyes; and her hair is jet black — I can't abide black hair," (Hannah had red,) "and she's moreover so distant, and so shy like, that there's nothing free and easy about her, as there was in the governess at my last place. Ah! Miss Cullen was a very different person, so full of fun and frolic. She'd come down when master and mistress were out and the children asleep; and play blind-man's-buff in the servants' hall with us as pleasant as possible, and we were all as free with her, as if she were one of ourselves."

"All that's mighty well, Hannah; but to my thinking, governesses as don't know their places, aren't fit for 'em. They aren't hired to romp in the servants' hall, but to attend to the learning and behaviour of the children entrusted to their care. A governess ought to be as much like a lady as possible; and as for Mrs. Stratford, I'm sure I never see'd a lady more genteel."

"Marry come up, Mr. Thomas, who made you such a judge of ladies?"

"Waiting on 'em, Mrs. Hannah, to be sure. Servants who wait at table, have a good opportunity of judging of those who think no more of their presence than if they were stocks or stones; and I have often formed my own hopinions while they were eating and chatting."

"Well, you may think as you like, Mr. Thomas, but you'll never get me to believe it was ladylike in Mrs. Stratford to throw his lordship's flowers out of window, and in his own house too. What do *you* think, Sally?"

This question was addressed to a very pretty young wo-

man who had entered while Thomas was speaking, and who filled the situation of under-housemaid.

"Ay, Sally, do you think that if my lord sent a nosegay to Mrs. Stratford, and that she thought it wasn't right to keep it, it was wrong of her to throw it out of the window?" demanded Thomas, with an air of anxiety.

"I don't see what else she could do with it, Thomas. If she kept it, it would, to my thinking, be like saying she approved of my lord's attention."

"Right, Sally, right," exclaimed Thomas, with a look of great satisfaction; "I was sure *you* would think as I do."

"Well, if I was my lord," said Hannah, "I'd see Mrs. Stratford far enough, I can tell her, before I'd send her any nosegays at a sovereign a piece. What's she, that she's to be made so much of, I should like to know?"

"She's a well behaved, *vartuous* woman, that's what she is, Hannah, who wishes to keep her own place, and let my lord keep his; and if she can manage that, it will be no easy matter, for his lordship can never see a handsome face without trying to make a fool of the owner, and more shame for him.'

Thomas glanced so expressively at the blushing face of pretty Sally, that it was clear his indignation at his lord's laxity of morals was not wholly disinterested; while Hannah, growing red with anger, declared, "that for her part, she never had nothink whatsomedever to say against his lordship; though she'd met him many's the time in the dressing and bed-room, he'd never been himperant to her; though other people," and she glanced spitefully at pretty Sally, "were always trying to keep out of his way;" an assertion the truth of which no one present seemed disposed to question.

While Lord Willamere was devising schemes to seduce the wife of his secretary, unchecked by one feeling of remorse, that unhappy man was submitting to the humiliation of going to creditor after creditor, in order to talk them over into waiting another year, or even six months, for the settlement of their accounts; conscious all the while, that there

existed no more likelihood of their being paid at the termination of the time demanded, than at the present. So often had these promises been made, and so ill kept, that the patience of the creditors of Lord Willamere was exhausted, and the reproaches, which they were denied an opportunity of uttering to his lordship, were directed with unsparing acerbity to his secretary.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Stratford, you can no longer make me believe that if Lord Willamere had the principle to pay, he could not find the means," said Mr. Bloxam, the butcher. "Why what becomes of his salary? Ay, tell me that. Hav'n't I been renewing his bills till I'm tired of 'em. *I* must pay for my meat, and why shouldn't he?"

This was only a specimen of the scenes which Stratford had to go through with all the persons who served the establishment of Lord Willamere. The servants, too, demanded their long arrears of wages in a tone that might have conveyed their belief that Mr. Stratford alone was answerable for the delay; and the tradespeople to whom he was indebted for the supply of his own wants, — wants limited to the strict necessaries of life, — had now also become importunate.

He would return in an evening, fatigued in body and depressed in mind, to seek consolation from the partner of his joys and sorrows; but, alas! the joys were "like angel visits, few and far between," while the cares were of daily and increasing occurrence. In vain did his fond wife endeavour to soothe his broken spirits, and to render their frugal meals cheerful. The privations and discomforts, which, in spite of the attempts to conceal them, were but too apparent, were now more severely felt than if he alone had to bear them; and his affection for her doubly increased his acute sense of the hardships of their lot. Bitterly did he now reproach himself for his selfishness in withdrawing her from comparative comfort to almost positive want; and when he learned that she was in a state likely to make him a father in some months hence, the tidings that under happier circumstances would have filled his heart with gladness, now only added to his

gloom. His Emily never blessed with robust health, became more delicate every day, and evidently required comforts which his poverty precluded the possibility of his providing for her. Her resignation, and her attempts to maintain a cheerfulness under a complication of evils that would have tested the firmness of a stoic, often brought tears to his eyes; and as he beheld her during the long evenings, occupied in converting her own slender stock of clothes into habiliments for their unborn infant, he would reflect with many a pang, how her scanty wardrobe now melting away was to be replenished, and how so frail a form was to suffice for the maternal duties and housewivery cares his idolized Emily would be called on to fulfil. What, too, would be the fate of their poor child? Was it to be doomed to pine through the vicissitudes of a dreary life of dependence, making its unfortunate parents reflect with still more bitterness on a union, that, were they but blessed with a modest competency, they would have felt to be indeed a blissful one? Poverty, thou gaunt spectre, whose approach fills all with dread; who frightest away summer friends even more rapidly than winter chases away the poor insects that basked in sunshine, never art thou so terrible, as when we behold thy chilling results on those dearer to us than life itself, and yet have not the power to ward off thy presence.

Lord Willamere had not desisted from his evil intentions towards the wife of his secretary, although foiled in his repeated attempts to find an opportunity of carrying them into effect. Many had been the visits offered, and the invitations to dinner given on his part to Mr. and Mrs. Stratford; but the ill health of the latter offered so strong a plea for rejecting both, that, although he was unwillingly compelled to postpone following up his schemes against her honour, he was by no means disposed to abandon them. Often would he send the most rare and costly fruit to the invalid, purchased at a price that would have abundantly supplied the substantial comforts and necessaries of which she stood in so much need; but what knew he of the privations which his extravagance

and recklessness entailed on those who depended on him for subsistence? *He* never experienced any privations, save the temporary want of some useless luxury or expensive bauble, which, when his finances were low, he might have denied himself for some time, but which, when his purse was again filled, he indulged himself in. That any one beneath his roof should be in actual want of a substantial, if not a dainty meal, never once entered his thoughts, and, if it had, he would in all probability have pronounced the person a fool, for not seeking, as *he* did, the supply of all wants by rushing into debt, without ever thinking how such debts were to be discharged. The fact was, Lord Willamere avoided as much as possible ever reflecting on disagreeable subjects, and piqued himself not a little on this proof of his epicurean philosophy. *He* fared luxuriously every day either at the tables of his friends, or at his own, and it never occurred to him, that the woman he most admired, and the man he most trusted, had barely sufficient food to support existence.

A portion of the next quarter's salary having been allotted to the tradespeople who supplied Willamere House, they consented to renew once more the bills of his lordship, already so often renewed; but on the proviso that his secretary should indorse them.

"The impudent scoundrels!" exclaimed Lord Willamere. "But of course, Stratford, you'll sign them. It is a mere matter of form insisted on by these harpies to pique me."

"If I possessed the means to meet the bills when due, readily, my lord, would I indorse them; but it strikes me that, as there is no probability of this being the case, it would not be honest on my part to do so."

"Really this is carrying your scruples to a very absurd extent, Stratford. It is not what I looked for in a man whom I believed perfectly devoted to my interests. The moment you refuse what these rascals require, you will have inflicted a mortal wound on my credit; for they will naturally enough say, 'Why his bills can be worth nothing when his own secretary, who best knows his affairs, will not indorse them.'"

This argument was irresistible with Stratford, not that his conscience was at all convinced by it, but that he saw his refusal would not only seriously offend Lord Willamere, but totally destroy his already straitened credit with his tradespeople. He signed the bills, and from that moment became haunted with the dread that he had committed an act that would entail misery on him at no distant day; and this addition to his troubles achieved the ruin of his health, already greatly impaired by constant anxiety and privations.

CHAPTER V.

QUICKLY did his doting wife detect the change in her husband's aspect. His heavy eyes, pale and haggard cheeks, and the sickly smile that tried to re-assure her, when alarmed by these symptoms she tremblingly questioned their cause, but too well convinced her that the pressure of hard necessity at present, and the dread of actual want hereafter, were preying on his life. And this, — this was the sad result of her compliance with his long, and often reiterated prayers for her consent to their union! Oh! why had she yielded to it, against the dictates of her own better jugdment. Had their marriage brought happiness to *him*, she would have borne with fortitude all the privations induced by poverty. But when did happiness and poverty dwell together? Does not the former terrified, quickly fly away, when the latter shows its grim face? Alas, yes! How brief had been their felicity! A few halcyon days, and now cankering cares had scared away peace; and Love, — Love only, had remained to confront the dire spectre Poverty. And was not Love itself, in this cruel position, an addition to their misery? Did it not, in the pity, the anxiety it awakened in their breasts for each other, aggravate, ten-fold, their sufferings? Could she have experienced, for herself alone, one half the inquietude, the sleepless, agonizing inquietude, that filled her tortured heart for him? Ah, no! well she knew she could not, and were *he* but exempted from the hardships of their position, *she*

could bear them without a murmur. Such were the bitter reflections that continually filled the minds of both husband and wife; increasing their mutual tenderness to an almost morbid state of exaltation which like a fever preyed upon their lives, and prostrated their mental energies.

When the time for his wife's *accouchement* drew near, Mr. Stratford demanded from Lord Willamere for her use, the money, which for his own, a delicacy amounting to weakness would have precluded him from urging.

"How unfortunate that you did not ask me yesterday, my good fellow," replied his lordship; "but as my ill luck would have it, I lost last night at whist all the money I had, and was just thinking of asking you to look out for some one who would cash a bill for me. If you know any one who will do so, your wants shall be the first attended to from the produce."

There was something so like a bribe, to do that which he so much disliked, held out in the promise that his wants should be the first attended to, that Stratford's sensitiveness was wounded, and there was a self-respect, almost amounting to dignity of manner, in his air, when he declared that, however pressing his wants were, he preferred bearing the annoyance to continuing a system so ruinous to his lordship, as that of raising money at such exorbitant interest.

"*Your* wants, Stratford, must then be much less pressing than *mine*, the relief for which cannot, I am sorry to say, be postponed," replied Lord Willamere, "so you must assist me on this occasion. I am going to the country to-morrow, to stay a few days at the Duke of Evandale's, and money I must have."

"Could he but see, and hear the conversation of the man to whom he sends me to borrow money," thought Stratford, as he wended his way to a money-lender in Chancery Lane, "he would be less ready to have recourse to such men, and more careful in managing his resources. Where will all this end?"

This was a question that often presented itself to his mind

of late, when on his sleepless pillow he reflected with alarm on the heavy liabilities he had incurred for Lord Willamere, and remembered the utter carelessness of that nobleman in all pecuniary matters, as well as his own total inability to meet any portion of them. At last he reached the house of Mr. Solomons, and after waiting half-an-hour in a dark and dingy room, ill ventilated and containing only three or four rickety chairs, and a table covered with a cloth, on which various devices were scrawled with ink, and sundry spots of grease, and stains of wine or beer were visible, he was summoned to the *sanctum* of Mr. Solomons, and ushered there by a lad of some sixteen years old, whose pale and elongated face spoke as ill for the larder of his employer, as his thread-bare and greasy coat did for his liberality in providing him with clothing.

"So here you are again, Mr. Stratford," exclaimed Mr. Solomons, his coarse mouth relaxing into an ironical smile; "I didn't expect to see you here so soon, after all you said against raising money by bills. I hope you ain't come here for any such purpose now, for two reasons: first, I don't like to see a gentleman act contrary to his conscience, and you said it went against yours to pay fifty per cent. for raising money; and secondly, never was cash so scarce in the city as at present —no getting it, I can assure you. Why there 's my Lord Duke of Deloraine has told me, he won't object to paying sixty, ay, or even sixty-five per cent. if I can get his grace five thousand pounds for six months. 'Can't be done, my lord duke,' says I. 'Must be done, Mr. Solomons,' says he, 'for I positively want the money.' 'I might manage it at *three* months, your grace,' says I, 'but at six months I couldn't do it for Her Majesty herself, if she required it.' 'Well, at three months then I suppose it must be,' says his grace; and I managed it at sixty-five per cent., but it is not for every one I could or would have done it, I can tell you."

"I want cash for a bill of Lord Willamere's for two hundred and fifty pounds, Mr. Solomons, and require it to be at six months."

"Quite out of the question, Sir, quite out of the question.

You may suppose that if I refused my Lord Duke of Deloraine, one of the best customers I have, a nobleman that never makes the slightest objection to any rate of interest I demand, I am not likely to do it for Lord Willamere, who sends you here huckstering and beating down my terms in a manner that is by no means the one I like to do business in."

The blood mounted to the temples of poor Stratford, while he listened to this coarse reproach, but he felt that it would not be prudent to resent it; for well did he know, that ill-disposed as was Mr. Solomons to lend the required accommodation, the other money-lenders with whom he had dealt for Lord Willamere, were still less inclined to discount his bills. "Will you tell me at once, Mr. Solomons, what you *will* accept for cashing a bill at three months, and whether or not, I may count on you renewing it at the expiration of that term, for as many more months?"

"Well then, Mr. Stratford, at a word, I am ready to find you the money, (you are of course aware I have no funds myself,) at sixty-five per cent, and a *douceur* for myself for the renewal. I will not be unreasonable; twenty-five pounds will satisfy me, but less than that I will not take."

"I must consult Lord Willamere, before I can accept such very extravagant conditions."

"And extravagant as you are pleased to consider them, I may not be in the humour to offer them again. Money was never so scarce in the market. Every one wants it, and I have at present no less than eight noblemen on my list, who will give me a higher rate of interest than Lord Willamere."

Stratford returned to his patron's, and acquainted him with the hard conditions named by Mr. Solomons, adding, that to accept them would be little short of madness.

"We must, nevertheless, do so, my good fellow," replied Lord Willamere; "there is no help for it; for, since you left this, confidently counting on your accomplishing the loan, I have bought a very fine horse, which was brought here for me to see, and the dealer insists on having ready money for him. I have made a capital bargain, for I have got him to

take a hundred and fifty less, in consideration of paying him ready money. He refused selling him for two hundred and fifty to Lord George Devereux, who offered him a bill at six months. You must therefore go back to Solomons, and close with him on his own terms. I wish you had done so at once, for I want the money confoundedly."

The bill was cashed, Mr. Solomons making a great merit of not having swerved from his conditions, which he declared he considered himself fully warranted in doing, owing to Mr. Stratford not having at once closed with them; but he took care to retain the sixty-five per cent. interest in advance, in spite of all Stratford's remonstrances to the contrary, saying, he always of late made a point of it, to prevent his clients suffering from the unpunctuality of noblemen and gentlemen.

This deduction so far diminished the sum raised, that, when it was handed over to Lord Willamere, he uttered "curses not loud, but deep," on the grasping scoundrel, as he termed Mr. Solomons; and avowed that now, however he might regret it, it was totally out of his power to appropriate any portion of it to the wants of his secretary. "Devilish sorry, Stratford, but I can't help it, I can't, by Jove! It can't make much difference to you, whether you have the money now or in a fortnight hence. A devilish great bore to be compelled to give up the horse too! hang that rascal Solomons. I must send my groom to say I have changed my mind about the horse, and won't buy him."

That evening the poor secretary wandered into a remote street to the house of a pawn-broker which he had often noticed in his rambles, and there raised ten guineas on his gold watch and chain, worth thrice that sum, in order that the hour of trial of his wife now daily expected, should not find him penniless; and when he returned to her, he endeavoured to assume a cheerful aspect as he pressed her to his heart. He assisted her with almost feminine forethought and activity in preparing for the little stranger, whose birth they anticipated with trembling anxiety; and having secured the attendance of the nurse of his wife, a respectable and attached though

humble friend, he waited with a trepidation known only to those who feel that the object dearer to them than life is in danger, the event so long looked forward to.

The following night I opened my eyes on this world of care, and was as fondly pressed to the breast of my poor father, as if I were the heiress to broad lands and a long line of ancient ancestry. The extreme delicacy of my mother's health induced her medical adviser to prohibit her attempting to nurse; and the narrow circumstances of my parents precluding them from engaging a wet nurse, my mother determined on rearing me by hand. Her health seemed to revive; and when she left her sick chamber, the few who saw her, thought her looking more beautiful than ever. Lord Willamere offered himself as sponsor to the infant; and his kind sister, Lady Altonbury, proposed being the godmother. When he paid his first visit to the young mother, her increased loveliness re-awakened the evil thoughts that had been slumbering in his mind since her arrival beneath his roof. He tried that generally sure road to a mother's heart, praises of her infant, and, affecting to admire children, pronounced that I was one of the prettiest he had ever seen. Flattered by his commendations of me, and thinking that in her new character of a mother, Lord Willamere would find more to respect than admire, in a woman wholly occupied by her husband and child, she forgot that she had ever seen aught in his manner that indicated any sentiment of a more personal nature on his part towards her; and she consequently evinced less reserve in her reception of him, although the most rigid and scrupulous disciplinarian in female decorum could have detected nothing to censure in her manner.

Women, far less pure-minded and reserved than Mrs. Stratford, find, on first becoming a mother, a material change in their feelings and notions. There is something so purifying, so sacred in maternity, that its benign influence corrects vanity and sobers down levity. Unhappily, circumstances too often occur which abridge the duration of this holy influence, but few can deny that it has existed. Many a vain coquette

has forgotten self in the love excited for her offspring, and has felt more gratified by the admiration bestowed on its beauty than by all the commendations ever given to her own. If such is the effect produced by maternity on minds of ordinary stamp, its result on one of so superior a nature as Mrs. Stratford's, may easily be imagined. A woman of the most advanced age could not have supposed herself more wholly out of the pale of libertine pursuits than she did now, when to her matronly character was added that of a mother. Deeply impressed with a sense of the sacred duties this new tie involved, she in the innocence of her heart, believed that it invested her in the eyes of others with as holy a shield from sinful thoughts as it did in her own. Hence the change in her manner, which, although less formal and reserved, was nevertheless all that decorum and female dignity could desire.

Lady Altonbury came to London expressly to answer at the baptismal font for the little stranger, and the knowledge so fully impressed on the mind of Mrs. Stratford of the seriousness and importance which that amiable and excellent lady attached to the duties of a godmother, was a source of comfort to her, now that Lady Altonbury had undertaken them for her child. On the day of the christening, Lord Willamere voluntarily promised his secretary, that all his influence should be exerted to procure him an appointment the first vacancy that occurred; and this unsolicited pledge on his part would have convinced Mrs. Stratford, had any doubt still remained in her mind, that he no longer entertained any warmer sentiment than good will towards herself.

Not long, however, was she suffered to remain in this belief. Lord Willamere under the plea of coming to inquire after the health of his god-daughter, sought occasions to visit her; and although he never did so without apprising his secretary, carelessly saying, "I will just step up and see Mrs. Stratford and my little god-child," both husband and wife began to find that these calls were more frequent than they wished, and heartily longed for the promised appointment,

which would enable them to leave a house where they could not be safe from the intrusion of the owner.

And now the time drew near when the bills indorsed by Stratford were to fall due, he reminded Lord Willamere of the fact, and urged as strongly as he could the necessity of making a provision to meet them. They had been once renewed as had been agreed on, but Mr. Solomons had on that occasion frankly declared his intention of not again granting their renewal. When told of this, Lord Willamere had assured his secretrary that the money should be forthcoming, but these repeated assurances had failed to remove the anxiety that haunted him. Too well were his worst fears justified when, the day the bills fell due, Lord Willamere confessed his inability to meet them, and advised Stratford to leave town, or conceal himself in some obscure corner of it until he could obtain money to satisfy Mr. Solomons. The advice came too late. While the poor secretary was meditating where he should go to, and how to break this annoying intelligence to his wife, at that moment greatly distressed by the illness of her child, he was arrested. Lord Willamere was absent at the House of Lords, when this mortifying event occurred. His lordship's solicitor, to whom Stratford wrote, was not to be found; and the sheriff's officer after waiting an hour at the request of his prisoner, and seeing that further delay was not likely to tend to any advantages to himself, peremptorily insisted on his accompanying him to his abode there to wait until Lord Willamere's solicitor could be found. Dreading to have an interview with his wife under the distressing circumstances of the moment, he wrote a few lines to her, to be delivered in case he did not return at night, left a note, detailing the state of the case, for Lord Willamere, and then resigned himself to his fate.

"I suppose, Sir, as how you would wish for us to go to Searl Street in a carriage?" said Mr. Moses.

"As you please," replied the inexperienced Stratford.

"No, Sir; not as I, but as you pleases. It bain't nothing to me whatsomnever to be seen going along the streets with

you; but 't will do your credit no good, I can tell you, for *you* to be seen with *me.* I 'm well known, though I say it as shouldn't say it perhaps, for being the smartest man in my profession in all London. I 'm always picked out for doing business with gentlemen at the west end of the town; and gentlemen as are really of the right sort, never find me uncivil, or against granting 'em every accommodation as lies in my power; provided they can afford it and are willing to pay for it."

"Let us have a carriage then," said the secretary; and one being called, he and his accommodating companion entered it, and were driven off to Searl Street.

Misfortunes, though long anticipated, fall not less heavily when they arrive. How often had a presentiment of the event that had now occurred, haunted Stratford during the last six months, and chased sleep from his pillow; nevertheless the realization of his fears overwhelmed him, as much as if he had never previously thought of its probability. His wife, his child — the latter, too, ill and suffering, and its anxious mother, so much needing his presence to support and comfort her! What would be his Emily's feelings when she should learn the truth? and that she must learn it he felt but too assured, for he knew that at that moment Lord Willamere, however he might wish to release him from durance, had not the funds at commond to do so; and his knowledge of his lordship's solicitor, Mr. Spellerman, did not encourage him to hope that *he* would put himself to any inconvenience or trouble to extricate him, even though well aware that it was solely for the accommodation of his lordship, that his secretary had indorsed the bills.

"Well, he 's safe off, that 's certain," said Mr. Bermingham, the *mattre d'hôtel* of Lord Willamere, as he saw from the window of his private room the carriage that contained Mr. Stratford and the sheriff's officer drive away. "I kept out of the way lest he should ask me to return him the sovereign he advanced me this morning. I saw he had no more in his purse; and I got that out of him by telling him there was not

a shilling in the house to pay for letters or parcels. And not far from the truth neither, for the other servants haven't seen a farthing of their wages for the last six months, and I have taken good care not to keep a sixpence of mine by me. No, no; the minute I lay my hand on a five-pound note, I go off and lodge it in safe hands, where I can get interest for it. No one shall catch me advancing a shilling for my lord. I 'm not such a fool. And I owe Mr. Stratford no obligations, I 'm sure. Quite the contrary, for he 's a regular skin-flint, and tries all he can to prevent me from having any profits out of my place. I could make a much better thing out of it if *he* were not in the house, looking after the cellar book, and doing a hundred other mean things, for which he 'll get but little thanks in the end, as I know. Why, the poor devil and his pretty wife half starve themselves rather than go in debt, and are too proud to touch any of my lord's things. More fools they, say I."

Sally, the under-housemaid, as good-natured as she was pretty, had, from the moment of Mrs. Stratford's arrival at Willamere House, taken a great liking to that lady. She had noticed the severe system of economy adhered to by the young couple, and with a quickness of perception peculiar to her sex, had divined the sentiments of Lord Willamere towards Mrs. Stratford; and had observed the reserve with which his attentions were treated.

"Yes," thought pretty Sally, "Mrs. Stratford is a virtuous and well-conducted lady, and it goes to my heart to see the straits to which she and her husband are driven. I 'm sure they hardly eat enough to keep body and soul together; and she's always trying to save me trouble by doing every thing she can to keep her rooms neat and clean. It 's a pity to see true lovers so ill off;" and Sally heaved a deep sigh, partly from pity for my mother and partly because she was reminded, by the case of my parents, of the consequences that result from improvident marriages, the dread of which had alone rendered her, for the last year, obdurate to the pleadings of Thomas the footman for their union. "Yes, it 's a terrible

thing to see the person one loves wanting the comforts to which he or she has been accustomed," thought Sally; "and then to have a poor baby to face this cold hard-working world, without any thing to leave for its support, if death should snatch away its parents!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE interest excited in Sally's breast for my mother led her continually to the chamber she occupied to perform a thousand little services and acts of kindness. She was ever ready to go of errands, to execute commissions, to take charge of the bread, butter, milk, and meat, brought to the house for the use of the young couple; and took especial care that no portion of any of these articles should be abstracted, a thing certain to have occurred, had she not interfered to prevent it. Thomas, too, lent his aid to protect the *comestibles* designed for the little *menage* on the second floor, and united with his beloved Sally in rendering every service in his power to my parents.

No sooner had he been made aware of the arrest of my father, — and the news was quickly spread through the house, — than he communicated it to his sweetheart.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Sally, "what a terrible blow to the poor lady! and the dear little baby so ill too! They did not get a wink of sleep all night, I'm sure, the poor child wailed so much; and, although I got up and went to their room to help to nurse it, or be of use, Mrs. Stratford wouldn't let me sit up. Ah! Thomas, you see what a sad thing it is for people to marry before they have laid by a little to make them comfortable!"

"So you are always saying, Sally; and yet time passes away, and our youth goes with it, while we are trying to scrape together a little sum to have to depend on in case of illness. It often makes me gloomy, Sally, when I think how long we'll have to wait; although I'm sure we do all we can to save money. We have neither of us tasted beer the last

year, nor taken sugar in our tea, out of economy, yet how little it adds to our savings."

"Don't say so, Thomas. It will make a good many shillings at the year's end; and besides, leaving off sugar and beer now will enable us to do without them always. Do we feel a bit the worse, Thomas, since we left them off?"

"No, certainly, Sally; and for my part I think I feel better; but then, our fellow-servants jeer us, and that sometimes makes me half ashamed."

"You men, you men, Thomas, hav'n't half the courage of us women in such matters! *We* don't mind being jeered, when we know it's for a good cause. But, Lord bless me, here are we gossipping all this while, instead of doing our work. I'll just run up and see if I can't be of some use to Mrs. Stratford. Poor lady, how I pity her!"

"And I'll ask Mr. Bermingham's leave to get out for an hour or two, and run to Searl Street, to where I heard the bailiff order the fly to be driven."

"Do, dear Thomas. It will be a comfort to poor Mr. Stratford to see some face that he knows in that dismal prison. Oh! it makes me tremble to think of the poor gentleman shut up with iron bars on every side!"

"It's not quite so bad as that yet, Sally; for they have taken him first of all to what they call a 'lock-up house,' where I'll go and see if he wants me to take any letters for him. So good bye, dear Sally. Do now, give me your hand, there's a dear. Ah! you don't know how I love you!"

"Well, you may be sure I'm not ungrateful, Thomas," was the reply, as the blushing Sally withdrew her hand from the fond grasp of her lover, and hurried from the spot.

On approaching the door of my mother's chamber, she heard the voice of Mrs. Hannah, the upper housemaid, in that quarter. The circumstance was so unusual, for Mrs. Hannah was known, all through the house, to bear no good-will to the secretary or his wife, that Sally instantly guessed that her present visit was to convey the evil intelligence of the husband's arrest to his poor wife. Yet she felt almost angry

with herself for the suspicion, and thought, "No, bad and ill-natured as Hannah is, she wouldn't have the heart to do that, neither."

Her fears, however, were confirmed, when the door opening to admit the retreat of the sour-tempered Mrs. Hannah, she heard her say, "Yes, Ma'am, a prison is a very dreadful place, indeed. Not as I knows from hexperence, for, God be thanked, neither I nor any one belonging to me was ever in one, but I've been told, that the poor prisoners are all locked up in dark cells with iron bars, and handcuffed, and chained to the wall, and fed on black bread and musty water. Yes, a prison is a dreadful place; and then, being ever after called a gaol-bird by every one as knows a man was there! But, lud, Ma'am, how mighty pale you look! Mayhap you'd like to take a little somewhat?"

"No, thank you, I shall be better by-and-bye," was the answer, uttered in so tremulous a tone, that Sally felt convinced there were tears in the eyes of the speaker.

"I've just been to Mrs. Stratford," said Mrs. Hannah, when she perceived Sally. "I dare say you wanted to have the first story, but she is so proud and distant-like, that I determined, the moment I heard that her husband was marched off to gaol, to give her the news, just to show her that, for all her airs and conceit, we servants are above her and her husband, in not being taken off to prison. Would you believe it, Sally? she never asked a question; only trembled like an aspen leaf, turned as pale as death, and I thought was going to faint. But not a bit of it. She seemed, after a great struggle, to recover herself in a minute or two, and looked so anxious to be left alone, that, seeing nothing was to be got out of her, I came away."

"Oh, Mrs. Hannah! how could you have the heart to tell it to her, all of a sudden, without taking time to break it to her by degrees?"

"Stuff, nonsense; the sooner people know things that concern them, the better; and as she has always been so high and mighty-like with me, whenever I wished to have a bit of

chat with her, I was not sorry to have an opportunity of paying her off."

Always respectful towards my mother never did Sally feel so profound a deference towards her as at present. Uneducated as she was, there was a natural goodness and delicacy in her mind, that well supplied the place of culture and acquired refinement, and made her so conscious of the sacredness of grief, that she was under the influence of considerable emotion when, after allowing some time to elapse after Hannah had disappeared, she timidly knocked at the door of my mother's chamber.

"I beg pardon, Ma'am, but I thought I might be useful. Will you please to let me nurse the dear baby a bit?"

The tears, restrained in the presence of Hannah, had plenteously flowed after her departure, and my mother's pale face was covered with them. She silently placed me in Sally's arms, and turned away to conceal that she was weeping.

"I hope you'll pardon me, Ma'am, but, indeed, you must try and not take on so. Things may not be so bad as you fear. Mr. Stratford is *not* gone to prison yet, and I trust in God won't be sent there. He has only been taken to the sheriff's officer's house, until matters are settled."

"Are you sure of this, my good Sally?"

"Quite sure, Ma'am, and Thomas has gone there in order to make himself useful by taking any letters that Mr. Stratford might wish to send."

"How kind and thoughtful," observed Mrs. Stratford.

"And no more than Mr. Stratford deserves, from every one," said Sally, "for he's all goodness and kindness himself."

This simple, but well merited commendation, touched the heart of the fond wife, and again brought the tears to her eyes; but she pressed the hand of Sally, and thanked her with a glance more eloquent than words.

"You'll see, Ma'am, we'll soon have him back here, please

God; for as soon as ever my lord hears of what has happened, he'll get him out."

This hope was, however, much less strong in the breast of my mother than in that of Sally; for she had seen enough of Lord Willamere's recklessness with regard to money matters, to dread that his finances might not be in a state to enable him to liberate her husband.

Sally danced me in her arms, addressed the most endearing epithets to me, and succeeded in bringing smiles to my poor little face.

"See, Ma'am," said the kind-hearted girl, "how little missy laughs and coos. Isn't she a sweet little darling? and so good! It's quite a pleasure to nurse her, and I wish you'd let me have the care of her oftener. I dote on pretty children, and never am so happy as when nursing 'em; and this sweet baby is so good, that it's quite a treat to be allowed to have her."

When was a mother's breast insensible to a compliment addressed to her first-born? Even in the midst of her affliction, mine felt a pleasure in Sally's well-timed praises of hers, and the good girl was rewarded for her efforts to please, by seeing that they were not wholly unsuccessful.

"If you could, without neglecting your duty, take charge of my child," said my mother, "I would go to the place where my husband is."

"Pray don't think of it, Ma'am, 't would only vex and grieve Mr. Stratford to see you in such a place. Thomas will soon be back, and bring you a letter, you may be sure; for, only think, Ma'am, if Mr. Stratford did not write a note to you before he was taken off, or send to see you, it could only be because he did not wish you to appear before the sheriff's officer, or to tell you of his trouble until it was over. And you wouldn't have known anything of it, Ma'am, only for Hannah's being so busy and meddling as to come and tell you. I wish she had let it alone, and so spared you a couple or three hours' uneasiness. But some people have so little

feeling, that they don't know how to behave to those that have."

Hour after hour passed, each fraught with indescribable anxiety and dismay to the distressed wife, before Thomas made his appearance; and the intelligence he brought was but little calculated to remove her fears. He had taken notes from the secretary to Lord Willamere to the House of Lords, and also to his lordship's solicitor, Mr. Spellerman; but as neither had attended to the summons they contained, Mr. Stratford had been, after a fruitless delay of some four or five hours, removed to prison.

"I know Mr. Spellerman *was* at home," said Thomas, as he related the particulars of his errand to Sally; "his servant told me he had a party to dinner, and could not be disturbed, so had desired to be denied to every one. I assure you, my dear Sally, it grieved me to the heart, ay, and angered me too, when I saw the rooms all lighted up at his house, and smelt the rich dainties preparing in the kitchen, and saw the various wines, and fine plate on the side-board, while poor Mr. Stratford, who worked early and late for the benefit of my lord, and who has, as you and I know, hardly enough to keep body and soul together, was taken from his wife, and was left fretting through the long hours, in a dark, dingy, lock-up house, with no friend to comfort him, and indebted to a poor servant like myself, for a good office."

"Ah! Thomas, it was enough to pain you. But you know that when Mr. Spellerman asked his friends to dinner, he couldn't know that his presence would be required elsewhere; and he couldn't well leave 'em."

"But, couldn't he give me a line to take to one of his clerks, I should like to know? telling him to go and get poor Mr. Stratford liberated."

"So he ought, Thomas; but I suppose, and more's the pity, it never entered his head."

"Or mayhap, which is more likely, Sally, he had no wish to interpose in the business. 'T was lucky I had the thought to take in my pocket the three pounds I had ready to put into

the Saving Bank, for, just as I expected, poor Mr. Stratford had not a shilling about him. That screw, Bermingham, had his last sovereign out of him this morning; and in a lock-up house, many a demand is made for money. Oh, Lord! the imposition I saw going on there is not to be imagined. I forced the poor gentleman to take the three pounds, and a difficult job I had to do so."

"God bless you, dear Thomas," said Sally with moistened eyes, and laying her hand fondly on his; "I never loved you so well as at this moment. I, too, have my little earnings in my box, and they shall all go to help Mr. Stratford."

"Well, Sally, if you love me better for it, 't will be some consolation for knowing that what I gave away will keep us some months longer from being married; and this thought, I'll own the truth, worried me all the way coming home; yet, believe me, for all that, I'd give it over again, Sally, rather than see the good gentleman in distress."

"Bless you for that, Thomas, bless you!" and Sally vouchsafed a kiss to her sweetheart, a rare and duly appreciated favour; and they separated: she, to deliver a note of which Thomas had been the bearer, from my father to my mother; and Thomas, to excuse his long absence to the *Maître d' Hôtel*, no easy matter, for that person, although by no means over attentive to his own duties, was little disposed to overlook the slightest negligence on the parts of others with regard to theirs. When Sally had ascended the back stairs to go to my mother, she heard the footsteps of her master mounting the front staircase on the same errand. She, therefore, retired to her own room, to wait until he had withdrawn from my mother's, and left her door ajar that she might hear him depart. He had been almost half an hour in the room, when Sally heard my mother's voice, in a more elevated tone than she had ever previously known that lady to use it, command him to withdraw. "Unhand me instantly, unhand me! my lord," exclaimed my mother; "you insult me, and degrade yourself."

Sally trembled, but, nevertheless, approached the door to be ready to come to my mother's aid if required.

"Pardon me, loveliest, most beloved of women. On my knees I implore you to forgive a moment of madness, caused by the intoxicating effect of your resistless charms. I have long and passionately loved you. In vain have I struggled to subdue my unhappy passion, and to chase your beauteous image from my breast."

"Rise, my lord; every word you utter is an insult; and, oh! merciful powers! what a moment have you chosen to wound, to outrage me!" And here a burst of tears checked my mother's utterance.

"Only hear me. Promise that you will pardon my rash attempt to compel you to listen to my vows of eternal affection; promise that you will not shun my sight, and I will submit to be your slave, to have no will but yours, no object in life but to please you and study your wishes. My life, my fortune, all—I lay at your feet. Stratford shall be instantly released, and I will procure for him a lucrative appointment, if you will promise to be less cruel, less scornful."

"Never, never!" exclaimed my mother. "Sooner would I submit to the worst ills that Poverty can inflict, than owe to him, who would dishonour the man who has faithfully served and implicitly trusted him, a single favour. Leave the room, my lord, or permit me to do so."

"Only say that you will not leave the house, that you will not betray my folly, my madness, and I will leave you. Nay, more; I swear I will never again enter your presence without your permission."

"Every moment that sees you here, adds to the insult you have already offered to me. I will enter into no terms, make no promises, and I insist on being left alone."

"You shall be obeyed, loveliest, but haughtiest of your sex. Such is your power over me, that I yield obedience to your commands even when you bid me leave you, the most difficult of all;" and Lord Willamere, bowing lowly, quitted

the room, leaving my mother overpowered by feelings of insulted virtue and indignation.

A short note from Lord Willamere, expressing his regret that he could not procure money to liberate him, was the only tidings that reached my poor father at the house of the sheriff's officer; and even for this note he was indebted to the indefatigable activity of the good-natured Thomas, who had induced the door-keeper of the House of Lords to take the one confided to him by my father to his lord,—the former note had not reached Lord Willamere.

From Mr. Spellerman, not even a note could be obtained, that gentleman persisting in refusing to acknowledge his being in town, although his servant had admitted the fact. The sheriff's officer, well experienced in similar cases, was not slow in discovering that his prisoner was not likely to prove a profitable one. His inability, whether real or pretended, to pay the fare for the carriage that conveyed them to Searl Street, impressed him with a conviction of this truth; and he lost as little time as possible in communicating it to his *fidus Achates*, the master of the house, whose interests it materially concerned.

"There 's not much to be made of this 'ere chap, I can tell you," said Mr. Moses.

"Sorry to hear it," replied Mr. Isaacs; "he 's either as close-fisted a feller as ever I comed across, or else he 's a pauper; and in either case, he'll bring no grist to your mill, I 'm a thinking. Some of these 'ere chaps keep such a fast hold on their money, that there 's no lugging a shilling out of 'em, and, mayhap, this one is of that sort."

"I don't much think it," said Mr. Moses, shaking his head, "for he 's comed out of a house where there 's a terrible scarcity of money. Why, that there Lord Willamere never pays no one, until he 's forced; his name 's as well known for that, as Rothschild's is for the contrary."

"Yes, that 's true enough; but don't you know, that, often when a master is hard up, those as have the management of

his money matters, are well to do in the world, and make their fortunes by him?"

"No doubt, it 's often the case, but, somehow or other, I don't think it is so with this 'ere feller."

"Well, time will tell, but I have my doubts that he 's not so poor as he pretends, and I 'll tell you my reasons. Mr. Solomons, as cute a chap as I knows anywhere, told me, that of all the customers he ever had, this one was the hardest about beating down interest and trying to get money on easy terms. It was this very beating down of interest as made Solomons discount the bills, for, says he to himself, 'If they didn't mean to pay, and didn't know they would have the wherewithal, they 'd never be so sharp about beating down the interest; for, those as knows they *can't* pay, makes no bother about what they promises to pay. And,' says Solomons to himself, 'this Mr. Stratford must have money, for he seems to understand the value of it so well, which I 've remarked, those as have the most of it always do. Would Mr. Stratford take such pains and trouble to beat me down about the interest, if it was only for his employer's sake? No, no, he has a personal motive in it, I 'm sure, and as Lord Willamere is such an extravagant and thoughtless man, this 'ere chap must have had plenty of hopportunities of making money."

"Somehow or other, I think this chap too great a spooney to have profited by such chances. Why, lord love you, Mr. Isaacs, there 's some men such perfect fools, that they 're not up to anything. This man turned so white in the face, and his lips trembled so when I nabbed him, that I made certain he had not the wherewithal to get his release, nor no great hopes of having any friend to come forward."

Soon after this conversation between Messrs. Moses and Isaacs, Thomas made his appearance, and, with much difficulty, induced my poor father to accept the loan of three pounds, after which, he took the notes, as previously stated, to his lord, and to Mr. Spellerman.

Anxious to ascertain the precise state of the prisoner's finances, Mr. Isaacs entered the room, and inquired, with some show of urbanity whether he would not be pleased to take some refreshment.

"Nothing thank you," was the reply.

"You can have anything you like here, Sir, from turtle soup down to mutton broth, and from any French *entrée* you choose to ask for, down to a plain mutton chop or beef-steak."

"I require nothing at present," said my father.

"It's growing dusk, so I suppose you'd like candles?"

"Yes," was the reply, and forthwith a pair of wax lights, were placed on the table. My father with the rigid system of economy he was in the habit of practising, immediately extinguished one of the candles, which produced a contemptuous smile from Mr. Isaacs, as he mentally promised, that his prisoner should pay, ay and at triple cost too, for both of them.

"I wonder," said he to himself, "how he thinks we as keep houses for the accommodation of such as him, are to live?"

"Have you any friend you'd like to send for, Sir?" inquired he.

"I have already sent to two;" was the answer.

"And who took the messages or notes?"

"Lord Willamere's servant who came here."

"Then, Sir, I must tell you, that it 's against the regulations of this house, that any one but my people, or Mr. Moses's, sould go of errands for prisoners. I keep men purposely for it, which I must pay, and how am I to be able to do so, if I 'm defrauded out of my regular profits?"

My father's face became flushed with indignation, when he heard the term defrauded, addressed to himself. He, however, so far mastered his feelings as to say, that he was ignorant that he was transgressing the rules of the house, when he employed Lord Willamere's servant.

"You 'll have to pay just the same, Sir, that 's all, for as

my men were in attendance, and ready to go on your errands, their time must be paid for."

"Very well," answered my father; and he was once more left to his solitude.

CHAPTER VII.

How tediously did the time pass on with my father in this wretched chamber! — his mind a prey to anxiety, as he dwelt with bitterness on the state of his poor wife, should he, as he now began to fear would be the case, be compelled to leave this place of temporary confinement for a prison. Oh! why had he involved her fate in his more wretched one? And their poor child too! Often did he press his icy hands to his burning temples, to cool the fever raging there, and endeavour to think upon some resource, or some well-disposed acquaintance who might be induced to extricate him. He passed over in review all the persons he knew in London, but, alas! as they were chiefly, if not entirely composed of the tradespeople of Lord Willamere, to whom large sums were long due, the retrospection brought him little comfort. One, however, among the number, he recollected had always manifested more patience and civility than the others. This was the grocer, Mr. Manvers, whose character for integrity he had ever found justified by the correctness of his accounts and moderation of his charges. He would send for Mr. Manvers, relate his position to him, and perhaps he might be induced to come to his aid in this dilemma. But, then, Pride interposed, to check the latent hope suggested by this expedient. How was he to solicit so great a favour from one on whose kindness he had no claim? How reveal to him, a comparative stranger, the affairs of Lord Willamere, the entanglement of which had led to the bill transactions, and finally to his own imprisonment? Was he, who had borne poverty, and all the privations it entails, uncomplainingly, to now become a suitor to a person of whom he knew little, and who knew even less of him? Oh! there was pain and

humiliation in the very thought, and he abandoned it almost as soon as it had been formed. But then again came the recollection of his Emily and their child. What was to become of *them*, when he should become the inmate of a prison? Was he not selfish, in giving way to the dictates of his own pride, when his adored wife's peace of mind was in question? Yes, he would vanquish his scruples, stifle the sense of delicacy that made him shrink from soliciting the aid of Mr. Manvers, and at once write to him to request his presence.

"To what vexation, what humiliation would I not submit, to be enabled to return home to my poor Emily, before she learns the cause of my long and unusual absence!" exclaimed my father.

He wrote to Mr. Manvers, and Mr. Isaacs, having despatched the note, again proffered refreshment to his prisoner.

"You 'll surely not refuse to order a bottle of wine, Sir?" said that individual, on profitable, not hospitable thoughts intent.

"I prefer a little tea," was the answer: and Mr. Isaacs withdrew, evidently ill-pleased at the result of his offer.

After a few minutes had elapsed, Mr. Moses made his appearance.

"As you seem unacquainted with the rules of houses like this, Sir, I must just tell you, that it 's the custom for all gentlemen as stop here to call for something, even if they don't want it, for the good of the house. That 's how people like Mr. Isaacs live, and are able to pay rent and taxes; and if it suits gentlemen's convenience to remain here a few hours, just to see what their friends will do for 'em, or to try if *indeed* they *have any* friends, for this is the place to find that out, they ought to remember to behave genteelly, and do what 's expected of 'em."

"I did not know the regulations," answered my father, with a deep sigh, "and as I felt unequal to touching any refreshments, I did not think it necessary to order any."

"Very likely, Sir, but you need not take any if you don't like it. This is Liberty Hall in that respect, for all it 's a lock-up house, but every one as comes here must order something for the good of the house. In like manner *I* must be paid for allowing you to stay here, when I could have taken you off straight to prison at once. I just mention these things because I see you are not used to our business, But you 'll become so in the course of time, I dare say, and then you'll want no one to instruct you."

"I have ordered some tea," observed my father.

"Lord love you, Sir! that goes for nothing. Order a couple of bottles of wine. Mr. Isaacs and I will empty one to your health, and the other will go to Mrs. Isaacs's cupboard. 'Live and let live,' that 's my motto; and I don't think any one can object to it."

Before the poor secretary could assent or dissent to the proverb, uttered with much self-complacency by Mr. Moses, the messenger returned from Mr. Manvers, saying that an answer would be sent. My father's faint hope of assistance from that quarter instantly faded, and it was not until it had vanished, that he became sensible, by the pang of disappointment, that he had counted on it. "Ay, ay, I see how it is," said Mr. Moses, "the old story! Won't come. 'An answer will be sent,' means precisely, that no more notice will be taken of the request. It 's astonishing how tender-hearted people's friends become, when they hear men are shut up in a prison. They can't bear to see a friend in distress, I suppose, so never come near 'em. It 's a pity, Sir, you went to the expense of sending a messenger for nothing. A pretty sum 't will come to, too; for Jem must have half killed the cab-horse, to have got there and back in so short a time!"

"I 'll trouble you for the fare of the cab, and the payment of my messenger," said Mr. Isaacs, entering the room: "Short reckonings make long friends, as the saying is, and it 's the rule of my house to have everything paid for when had."

"How much is the amount?" asked my father, putting his hand into his pocket.

"Seven shillings and sixpence for the cab, and five shillings for the messenger."

"And as your hand is in, Sir, 't will be just as well to pay me for the fly that we came in here. It 's but a trifle — seven and sixpence; so a sovereign will clear both the little accounts," observed Mr. Moses.

The sovereign was abstracted from the pocket of my father, and handed over to the claimants, who left the room to divide it between them.

"I say, Moses, did you see, we got him to fork out at last," said Mr. Isaacs, "for all you thought he had no money."

"He 's no better than he should be, you may be sure," was the reply; "for he positively pretended to have no cash, when I asked him for some to pay the cab when we arrived. A regular screw, and deserves to be worked. I can't abide such fellows — wanting to do us out of our profits. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, but they have no shame in 'em."

"It 's no use letting him remain here, you may take my word for it; the house will gain nothing by such a skin-flint, and no one will come to release him. You see the man he sent for wouldn't come, nor the lawyer that the servant went for."

"I 'm quite of your opinion, and will march him off, but let us first get a couple of bottles of wine out of him. I told him 't was the custom here, so he 's prepared for it."

"If I thought he had another sovereign or two left, I 'd send up the wine, but I didn't hear the jingle of any more coin in his pocket when he drew out the one we've got."

"Let us take our chance. I 'm rather thirsty, and two or three glasses of wine will do me good; and it 's my opinion that there 's a few more sovereigs where this one came from."

"Very well, I 'll send up the wine, so that he can't say that it was not served to him."

"No, no, it 's all fair and above board here, Mr. Isaacs."

Contrary to the expectations of Messrs. Isaacs and Moses, and indeed of my father himself, Mr. Manvers, the grocer, in due time made his appearance at Searl Street. He was a

grave man, and on this occasion looked even more so than usual. He listened with an unchanged aspect to the statement of the secretary. He, however, shook his head when the bill transactions were explained, and opened his eyes in astonishment when informed that no portion of the money raised had ever entered the purse of my father.

"Lord Willamere will not, surely, leave you here to suffer for his debts?" demanded Mr. Manvers.

"His lordship would not, I am convinced, had he the means, this moment, of releasing me."

"But ought he, can he, as an honest man, let you be imprisoned on his account, — if he has plate, horses, carriages, furniture, any of those things which even persons much beneath his lordship in station are not without?"

My father was silent, for he did not think himself justified in disclosing to any one the fact, that all the personal and household property of Lord Willamere had long been assigned over to a friendly creditor, in order to preserve them from those less amicably disposed. Careless and culpably negligent as Lord Willamere had been towards him, my father possessed so good a heart, and was so guileless, and unskilled in worldly lore, that he judged the blamable conduct of Lord Willamere, much more leniently than it deserved, and shrank from revealing aught that could militate against either his character or his pecuniary interests. While he paused, embarrassed what reply to make, Mr. Manvers looked still more gravely than before, and his countenance assumed an expression of austerity, that left little hope in the mind of the poor secretary that he had anything to expect from him.

"You have not answered my question, Mr. Stratford, and your silence, I confess, appears incomprehensible to me. If Lord Willamere suffers you to be imprisoned for his debts, he being, as a peer, protected from arrest, then I must pronounce his conduct anything but what might be expected from a nobleman or gentleman, and your forbearance towards him surprises me. I have another question to ask you, Mr.

Stratford. Do you think the house of Lord Willamere, a professed libertine, as his lordship is accused of being, a proper abode for your young and handsome wife, when you can no longer be there to protect her?"

"I have no friends, no means to provide her a home, however humble," said my father; his lips tremulous with emotion. "If I had, never should she have entered that house."

"Perhaps it would have been better for both your sakes that she never had," observed Mr. Manvers gravely.

My father looked at him inquiringly, and then said, "Why, why would it have been better? I know that it would have been infinitely better for her, that we had not married: it needs no one to remind me of that; for one of the heaviest reproaches I have to make myself, was the having urged her to leave a home where she was esteemed, respected, and knew no privations, to share my lot, the hardships of which I ought to have too well known to have exposed her to them."

"I did not mean to reproach you with your marriage, although it must be admitted it was an imprudent one, situated as you were."

"Why then did you say it would have been as well that my wife had never entered Lord Willamere's house?"

"I hardly know, Mr. Stratford, whether I am justified in entering on so very delicate a subject; yet, as I made the reflection you have repeated, perhaps, I ought to state the reason. You are not probably aware of the evil rumours circulated against your honour, and the purity of your wife, in consequence of her having taken up her abode beneath the roof of Lord Willamere?"

"Merciful God, is it so?" exclaimed my father, turning pale as death. "Oh! my poor Emily! my poor Emily!" and he sank into a chair. His agony, too deep to leave a doubt, even on the most suspicious mind, that it was feigned, secretly touched the feelings of Mr. Manvers, an upright, honourable man, who could sympathize with the pain he had unconsciously inflicted.

"Was it not enough to entail poverty on her, but must I also have exposed her fair fame, dearer to me than life itself, to calumny? Oh! Mr. Manvers, if you knew her, you would, like me, be convinced of her purity, of her irreproachable conduct! And is this then the reward of a conjugal devotion, seldom equalled, never exceeded,—of a resignation under privation rarely borne with such fortitude even by man? O! this, is the most bitter of all my trials, the one which most unmans me."

And my poor father gave way to the emotion, he could no longer control; all the griefs pent up in his heart for long months, seemed now to overflow the boundaries in which they had hitherto been confined, and his agitated frame shook in the vain struggle to subdue them.

"How has this man been wronged!" thought Mr. Manvers; "I wish I had not revealed to him the evil rumours that had reached me."

"I feel hardly less indignant at the injury offered to Lord Willamere, by those base and unfounded slanders, than at that aimed at my wife, and my own character," said my father. "He is incapable of harbouring even a dishonourable thought towards me or mine, and would, I am sure, be the first to resent such a charge. But tell me, I entreat you, Mr. Manvers, what you really did hear? To refute slander, one should be made aware of its extent; and though it will be indeed a most painful thing for me to listen to reports so humiliating, so wounding to my feelings; nevertheless, I must request you to be explicit with me."

And, although pale as marble, my father, by a violent effort of self-control, resumed a more calm and composed aspect.

"I wish you would not call on me to inflict this pain on you, and on myself also," replied Mr. Manvers; "for I assure you, I am now so fully convinced of the utter falsehood of the rumours I had heard, that it will be very painful for me to repeat them. Spare me the disagreeable task, and as an amend for the chagrin I have already caused you, and at a moment too, when you had so much cause for annoyance on

other grounds, allow me to tell you, that if I can be of use to you in your present dilemma, it will really give me satisfaction to do so."

"Thanks, thanks! I feel your kindness as I ought, but you must let me know the worst."

"Well then — but really I hardly can bring myself to utter what must inflict pain, knowing, as I now do, the utter falsehood of the reports."

"Pray let me hear them at once."

"You were represented as one of those convenient husbands who submit to their own dishonour. Men who, instead of being the guardians of the purity of their wives, expose them to temptation, and profit by the result."

My father groaned aloud and shuddered, and Mr. Manvers again begged to be excused entering into further particulars.

"Proceed, I pray you to proceed," exclaimed the agitated man.

"A lucrative place was, it has been stated, to be the reward of your in—." Infamy, he would have said, but he checked himself at the first syllable.

"Oh God! Oh God!" muttered my father.

"The evil rumours were chiefly circulated by servants, who had heard them from their masters, some of whom had seen you and your wife at the table of Lord Willamere, and marked the more than ordinary interest his lordship appeared to take in the lady. Her beauty, and residence in Lord Willamere's house, added to his well-known libertinism, offered sufficient grounds for slander; and when the reports in question proceeded from his lordship's friends and companions, you can hardly wonder that they received credence. If gentlemen knew the injury they inflict by their unrestrained conversations, and comments in the presence of servants waiting on them at table, they would be less apt to indulge in them. All the rumours that float about London, and find their way at last into the slanderous newspapers, may be traced to this source. A few coarse jokes, or the bantering too often carried on between libertines, have frequently led to the loss of

reputation of women, whose only faults were a levity originating in high spirits, and indulged in, through want of knowledge of the world."

"And this terrible slander obtained belief?"

"I regret to say it did. Few persons take the trouble of inquiring into the truth or falsehood of evil reports. It is enough that a semblance of probability exists, to gain them general credence, and the slandered are often the last to hear of them."

My father felt as if the brand of dishonour had fixed an indelible mark on his brow. At one moment, the burning blood of shame mounted to his very temples, and the next, a cold shudder passed over his frame.

The entrance of Mr. Moses interrupted further conversation; and was explained by that person informing the prisoner, that he could no longer remain in Searl Street — "I have let you stay here longer than I ought," said Mr. Moses; "but now we must be off."

At this moment the voice of Mr. Isaacs was heard in tones of loud expostulation on the stairs. "It's no use, Ma'am, going up to disturb the prisoner now, for he's just going to be taken off to gaol."

"I *will*, I *must* see him," said a voice, which even though half-choked by emotion, still retained an unusual sweetness. — "Good God! it is my wife," exclaimed my father, rushing to the door to meet her, forgetful for the moment that it was locked, and her tremulous tones of entreaties still reaching his ear. — "I will ring, Sir," said Mr. Manvers; and pulling the bell-rope repeatedly, Mr. Isaacs made his appearance. "Be so good as to allow Mrs. Stratford to come up to her husband: — or stay, I will go and conduct her myself." And so saying, Mr. Manvers left the room and went to her.

"I didn't know, Sir, whether you might wish to see the lady or not."

"Not wish to see my wife?" exclaimed my father, greatly agitated.

"Why, for the matter of that, Sir, I couldn't be sure that

she was your wife." Here my father looked so fiercely at him, that he changed his tone: "I beg pardon, Sir," resumed he; "what I meant was, that so many ladies come here after gentlemen when they are arrested, and always say they are their wives, that I sometimes don't know what to think; and often the gentlemen would rather *not* see 'em, and scold me for letting 'em in, they cry, and take on so."

He had hardly finished this speech, when the agitated, tearful wife entered, and was pressed in the arms of her husband. The meeting was a very touching one; and Mr. Manvers, having made a sign to Mr. Isaacs to withdraw, was on the point of following him, when my father requested him to remain. "I almost wish you had not come here, my poor Emily," said he; "this is no place for you."

"My place is near you, wherever you may be, dearest," replied his wife, clinging with trembling eagerness to his arm, as if to seek protection — "you must bear up against this trial, my beloved."

"With you I can bear any trial, but do not let us again be separated. Let me share your prison, it will be happiness, compared with the wretchedness of being parted from you. I have brought our child, and a few things for present use. She is below with Sally, who accompanied me here. I left Willamere House, never more to enter it. Oh! Henry, you know not, you cannot know, what I have suffered since you left me;" and here a passionate burst of tears impeded my mother's utterance.

"Speak, dearest Emily! say what has occurred. I implore you to tell me."

My mother cast a timid glance at Mr. Manvers, as if to indicate to her husband, that what she had to communicate was not fit for a stranger's ear; but he, understanding that appealing look, told her that Mr. Manvers was his friend, his only one in the present hour of trial, and begged her to have no reserve on account of his presence.

"Oh! Henry, how have you been deceived by the selfish unfeeling man, in whom you have trusted! Could you have

imagined that Lord Willamere, emboldened by your absence, and forgetful of all decency or pity for my distress, dared to insult me by an avowal of his passion!"

My father started from his seat as if an adder had stung him; his very brow became crimsoned with indignation and shame, and he shook with emotion. "The villain, the villain!" exclaimed he, "and it is for this man; — but no, I will not profane the name of man by so calling him; — it is for this vile, this heartless wretch, that I am now a prisoner; that I have for months and years suffered privations and humiliations without end, while unceasingly toiling in his service, too conscious of his pecuniary embarrassments to remind him of my own. Oh! Emily, can you forgive me, for having exposed you to such insult?" And here my poor father's utterance was checked by the violence of his feelings.

His wife forgot her own grief in pity for his, and soothed him with a tenderness that melted the heart of Manvers, who now, perfectly convinced of the utter falsehood of the tales circulated against this poor but excellent couple, determined to assist them to the utmost of his power. He arranged with Messrs. Isaacs and Moses, that their prisoner should remain where he was for the night, that accommodation should be found for his wife and child; and having seen a repast which he had ordered served to them, he bade them farewell for the night, promising to be with them early next morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

True love! the most unselfish of all the passions, — thou that canst make thy votaries forget self in anxiety for another, and that canst only lead them to unhappiness through the object beloved. — O! what like thee, can refine and purify the heart!

Each occupied only by thought for the other, my father and mother endeavoured to assume the appearance of a calmness that was, alas! foreign to the minds of both. What the morrow might bring, neither dared to reflect on. A prison, in all its

dreariness, arose in the gloomy vistas which their imaginations pictured, and a dread of separation, the last — worst ill of all that menaced them, haunted their thoughts. Yet, notwithstanding these dismal forebodings, each tried to cheat the other by the semblance of composure, while their hearts were a prey to anxiety and depression. The baseness of one whom he had regarded and confided in, overpowered the firmness of my father. In whom henceforth was he to trust, when Lord Willamere, whom he had so faithfully, so devotedly served, had betrayed and wounded him in the most tender point? When he looked on the pale but beautiful face of his wife, on which care had already left its traces, but where purity and innocence had set their seal, he wondered, that even the most reckless libertine should have dared to entertain for such a being aught approaching to an unholy feeling. Was she, in her calm and almost angelic beauty, a fit object for the sensual desires and grovelling appetites of a libertine? O! no. It was sacrilege so to regard her, and accursed be he who had presumed to insult her chaste ears with vows of lawless passion, or to view her in any other light than that of a model for wives and mothers. And this was the woman with whose fair fame the tongues of sinful men had been busy. There was torture, there was madness in the thought; and as he looked on that mild and lovely face, beaming with tenderness on her slumbering infant, and turning from it to him with glances full of pitying affection, he felt that debased, and corrupted indeed, must those be, who could, after having once seen her, harbour, even for a moment, a single suspicion to her disadvantage.

Poor man, ignorant of the world, and of the vice of those who form a considerable portion of its denizens, he was prone to judge others by himself. As soon could he have suspected the chastity of an angel as that of the lovely creature before him; and he could have wept in very tenderness, as a fond mother would over an innocent and wronged daughter, as he remembered that his Emily had been traduced and insulted. But not always were his feelings so calm. At moments, an

unconquerable rage would fill his mind; and had the vile libertine, who had dared to breathe his passionate vows to his wife's ear, or the base aspersors of her fame and his honour, stood before him, he would have perilled his life to avenge the wrong. Never previously had his breast been shook by such a whirlwind of contending passions. Anger, love, and pity strove by turns for mastery; but jealousy, "the green-eyed monster," that tortures less pure breasts, found no entrance in his honest and confiding one. He knew that his honour was as safe in the keeping of his Emily as in his own; and that the mind of his slumbering child was not more free from earthly stain or sin than was hers. Never, if he could guard against it, should her ear be shocked by hearing that her virtue had been questioned — that she had been regarded as the paramour of Lord Willamere! He felt that he would prefer death to her learning this terrible tale, for he wished that her pure mind should never be sullied by a knowledge that such wickedness could be, and, above all, be directed to her. And he too, how had his character, — that by which he lived, by which he hoped to gain an honourable maintenance for his wife and child — been assailed. O God! that *he* should have lived to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, as that vilest of all wretches that shame manhood, a husband conniving at his own dishonour!

While these torturing reflections passed through his mind, his wife marked their effect on his changeful countenance, and, approaching him, gently pressed her fair and delicate hand on his fevered brow.

"Do not give way to painful thoughts, dearest," said she, in the low and sweet accents that ever soothed and charmed his ear. "A prison is not always, I am prone to hope, so cheerless an abode as it is represented. Heaven be praised, I have a right to be with you, even there, and never did I bless this privilege more than now. I can make pretty drawings, and various ingenious little things, which, through the medium of Mr. Manvers, who seems so kindly disposed towards us, may find a sale. We have been accustomed to

privations, and, God be thanked! have learned to bear them, and I trust that by our joint exertions we can earn sufficient to supply our wants."

"Bless you, my sweet Emily! always my soother and comforter under every trial," replied the fond husband, as he removed the hand from his temples and pressed it to his lips. "Yes, even a prison cheered by your presence will be to me preferable, oh! how far preferable, than a palace would be without, could I but forget that it was my selfishness that has led you there."

"How you torment yourself, dearest! You ought long ere this to have known how warmly my heart pleaded your suit for our marriage, and that aught like regret for that which I must ever consider the happiest event of my whole life, sounds like a reproach to me for having encumbered you with a wife and child."

"Blessed, blessed ties, that bind me to an existence that without them would be, indeed a dreary, an insupportable one! Yes, even here, with so much to render me anxious for the present, and to alarm me for the future, I feel that I have a great deal to be thankful for, and that, while Heaven spares me you and our child, I ought not to despair."

In such communing, this poor, but loving pair passed the early part of the night, until slumber, that greatest of all blessings to the wretched, pressed their eye-lids, and for a few hours granted an oblivion of their cares.

When my father opened his eyes next morning, for a moment he felt as if in a dream, but the sight of the iron-barred windows, and the unclean room with its gaudy but faded finery, brought the reality to his mind. His wife and child still slept, and as the light from the shutterless window fell on their faces the calm beauty of both touched him almost to tears. The child smiled in its slumber — poor innocent! unconscious that even already care and poverty had laid their chilling grasp on its young life, and that, from its gentle sleep, it was to open its eyes in a prison; and the fair young mother in her slumber sighed forth the name of her husband,

and pressed the pillow on which her head reclined, to her cheek, believing it to be his hand. Oh, Sleep! how calm, how holy art thou! How like thy sister, Death! Surely, if ever it be permitted to mortals to hold communion with heavenly spirits, it must be when resigned to thy benign influence. They are then more freed from worldly thoughts and sinful passions, and their very helplessness, like that of infants, places them more immediately under the protection of their Father in heaven. My father's troubled spirit became calm as he contemplated the two beloved beings in repose. They comprised his world, his only treasure. Were they no longer in existence, life would no more have a single charm, a single blessing for him. There lay his all — the only comfort, the sole drops of sweetness vouchsafed to his cup of bitterness; and yet, how were his cares for the present, and his dread for the future, rendered sharper by his anxiety for their well-being! He feared lest every noise might break their slumbers, now so sweet and calm, and that his poor Emily should awake sooner than he could wish, to behold the iron bars of their prison, and be reminded of the painful realities of their actual position.

"How many," thought my father, as he gazed, with almost woman's tenderness, on his wife and child, "less worthy, oh! how infinitely less worthy than my poor Emily, are at this moment pillowed on down, and surrounded by all the appliances of wealth and splendour, who will awake to enjoy luxuries, and to frame new and imaginary wants, certain of the means of procuring them, while this fair, this pure creature will awake to feel 'the stings and arrows' of our hard fortune, denied even a modest competency wherewith to minister to our humble desires! Oh, Fortune! well hast thou been accounted blind, when thou canst heap thy golden stores on the less worthy, and leave a being like this to pine in want. But let me not murmur. Thy ways, Almighty, are inscrutable, and, as Thou hast deemed it fit to steep me and mine in poverty, teach me to bear it with resignation. Teach me to remember, whenever misfortune presses most heavily

upon me, that hundreds, nay, thousands, more worthy than I am, are exposed to similar, perhaps to greater trials, and to bow with submission to Thy will."

Those who have fought with fortune, and vainly resisted her strokes, will acknowledge that the angry spirit in which they have been received, greatly adds to the irritation of the wounds inflicted. But no sooner does resignation take the place of anger, than a mental relief is experienced; although the wounds are deep as before, they rankle less; and submission brings in time, healing on its wings. My mother at length awoke, but her first glance was not as her husband feared it would be, at the iron-barred window, but at him; and, oh! what unutterable love was in that look. The next glance was at her sleeping child, and then her eyes were lifted towards Heaven, in thanks for the possession of these blessings. How angelic did she appear, as with rapt devotion her lips moved in prayer, and, when ended, she pressed them to her husband's brow.

Mr. Manvers was announced before my father and mother had completed their matinal meal. His manner towards them was even more cordial than on the preceding evening, and he assured the former that he felt the utmost desire to be of use to him.

"To do this, it will be necessary for me to know your exact position, and the extent of the engagements into which you have entered," said the worthy man.

When informed of them, and the amount was much larger than he had anticipated, — he questioned my father as to the likelihood of Lord Willamere's ever paying those debts which, in truth, were his, and his only. The bare mention of that name, brought the flush of indignation to the cheek of the poor secretary, while he answered, that before he had learned the base attempt of his lordship to corrupt his wife, he would have considered a doubt on this subject as an injury and insult to him. "But now," added my father, "I can believe him capable of anything, and my conviction is, that he will

leave me to suffer for my foolish and misplaced confidence in his honour."

"I hardly know what to advise, or what to do," observed Mr. Manvers. "Your responsibilities amount to a large, — a very large sum." But here a glance at the pale cheeks and tearful eyes of my mother, so touched the feelings of the kind-hearted man, that his pity for her almost conquered his prudence. Still, the sum required to free my father from the whole of his liabilities, was too serious a one to be lightly proffered. It was true, Mr. Manvers was a rich man, and had only two children to provide for; but to pay so much money for so worthless a person as Lord Willamere, was really vexatious. Yet, if he did not free my father, the poor man would be sent to prison, and the fair young creature before him, and her child, would have to share his hard lot. What a foolish man Stratford must be to have involved himself in such a labyrinth of difficulties for any one, but more especially for so unworthy a person as Lord Willamere; — and a sentiment of anger against the poor secretary, entered his mind.

A thorough man of business, with habits of scrupulous exactitude in fulfilling his engagements, and consequently cautious in forming them, he could not make allowance for the utter want of prudence in my father, as revealed by the statement he had extracted from him, nor for his total ignorance and inexperience in matters of business. There was something of contempt mingled in the pity he entertained for him. But then followed the reflection, — and there was a certain portion of self-complacency in it, of the general deficiency of learned men — in a pecuniary knowledge of affairs, and of their vast inferiority in this respect to men of business like himself. He felt disposed to thank providence that *he* was not a scholar, lest he too might have been as ignorant of money matters as the poor ruined man before him: but this very self-complacency engendered kind sentiments towards my father. "I'll tell you what, Sir," said he, "I'll at once pay this bill of Mr. Solomon's, and, as no other detainer has

been lodged against you, my doing so will secure your liberty. Let me settle with the harpies here, for be assured you are no match for them."

"I know not how to thank you, indeed I hardly think I ought to accept the service you so very kindly offer to render me, knowing, as I do, that I am not likely to have the means of repaying you."

But the eloquent glance of my mother spoke volumes to the good-natured Mr. Manvers, and he had seldom in his life experienced more self-satisfaction than at that moment, when assured that he had rendered so charming a woman, happy. He left the room, to arrange matters with Messrs. Moses and Isaacs; and, my mother threw herself into the arms of her husband, filled with gratitude to Heaven, for having in their hour of need, raised up such a friend to serve them. The thinness of the walls, and partitions of the ill-built house of Mr. Isaacs, enabled those in the rooms immediately above the ones occupied by the owner, to overhear all that passed in them, and my parents soon heard loud and angry voices in discussion.

"What! twenty shillings for two bottles of sherry?" exclaimed Mr. Manvers; "why, I keep as good wine as any merchant in London, and I never dreamt of charging any such price."

"That may be, Sir," replied Mr. Isaacs, sulkily. "You charge what you like, and I charge what pleases me. Your customers go to you through choice, and may go elsewhere if it suits them, mine come to me from necessity, can't help themselves and so I must charge accordingly."

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Stratford drank two bottles of wine last night, do you?"

"He might have drunk 'em, if it so pleased him to do, for they were served to him; but as he didn't that wasn't my fault, they must be paid for all the same. And what 's more, I don't see why people should grumble about such trifles. 'Live and let live' is my motto; and I must say, that I never had a worse customer enter my house than this here friend of yours.

Wouldn't have a bit of dinner served, nor order any thing, which he ought to have done, if only from a sense of common decency and for the good of the house."

The husband and wife looked at each other, as they listened to this new code of lock-up-house etiquette; and both mentally prayed that they might never again be subjected to its influence.

To those not accustomed to analyze human character and motives, it would have appeared a strange anomaly, to hear Mr. Manvers disputing every item of the gross imposition entered in Mr. Isaacs' account, while determined, with but a faint prospect of eventually being reimbursed, to pay the whole of the amount of the writ taken out against my father by the usurer Solomons, with all the legal expenses that had accumulated thereon. But to those acquainted with mankind, there was nothing strange in this mixture of parsimony and generosity, for they know that they continually meet in the same individuals; and that it is owing to a strict observance of prudence and economy, that people are enabled to perform generous actions.

And now all accounts were settled, and the harpies of the lock-up-house paid, the next question was, where were the Stratfords to go? "Have you no friends who would receive you for a few days, until we could see what can be done?" demanded he; but the rapid and melancholy change in the countenances of both husband and wife gave a negative to the question, before their faltering lips could pronounce one: and the kind-hearted, but somewhat *brusque* Manvers sincerely regretted having asked one which, by reminding them of their friendless position, had evidently occasioned them so much pain. "How very stupid it was of me," resumed he, after a short pause, "to forget that I have a couple of spare rooms at my house where you will be very comfortable for the present, and where I can assure you of a very hearty welcome."

There was nothing left for my parents, but to accept the kind invitation; and, deeply impressed with a sense of the goodness of him who gave it, they entered the hackney-coach,

which had been sent for by Mr. Manvers, and drove to his house. With a delicate regard to the feelings of his new guests, he led them into the house through the private door instead of through the shop, that they might not be exposed to the prying gaze of the shopmen or customers who filled it; and having conducted them up stairs into a neatly furnished sitting-room, with an excellent bed-room and dressing-room adjoining, he told them to consider themselves quite at home, and begged that they would share his repasts, naming the hours at which they were served.

"On hospitable thoughts intent," Mr. Manvers went to consult with his housekeeper, who also enacted the part of cook in his large but well-ordered establishment, on the necessity of making some addition to the family dinner. He always dined apart from his clerks, as he partook that meal with his two daughters, girls of ten and eleven years old, on whom he doted. "A gentleman and his wife, particular friends of mine," said Mr. Manvers, anxious to impress the precise Mrs. Manley with a respectful consideration for his guests, — "have done me the favour to come and spend some time with me, and I desire that every attention may be paid to their comfort while they remain."

"Certainly, Sir," was the reply.

"Have a couple of roast chickens added to dinner; and tell Betsey the housemaid to give all the time she can spare from her work to Mrs. Stratford's child."

"Two additional rooms to clean every day, Sir, will, I fear, not leave Betsey any time for the child; but I know a nice tidy young girl, Sir, a cousin of Betsey's, who is looking out for a place, and who would be very glad, for the sake of her meals, to come here and take charge of the child, and wait on the lady too while they stay, and she could sleep with Betsey."

"A capital plan, Mrs. Manley, send for her directly; but mind, Mrs. Stratford is not to know that this young person has been engaged on her account. Let it be supposed that she belongs to the house." And having satisfactorily made these arrangements, Mr. Manvers hurried off to his shop to

superintend his business, well pleased with himself and others; while Mrs. Manley, having sent out for the chickens and for Betsey's cousin, donned her best cap, and a snowy muslin apron, and proceeded to pay her respects to the new visitors.

"I hope, Ma'am, that you won't scruple to ring the bell for anything you want," said the good woman, after having respectfully welcomed my father and mother. "Here, Ma'am, you'll find plenty of nice books;" and she took the key of a large and well-stored book-case from her pocket, and handed it to my mother. "I'll send you up the morning papers immediately, Sir; and here you'll find paper, pens, and ink," continued she, addressing my father, as she opened a neat mahogany writing-desk, which formed one of the pieces of furniture of the apartment. "Oh, the dear child! bless its little heart, what a pretty creature!" said Mrs. Manley, turning to the baby which its mother had laid on the sofa, and who, refreshed by its long sleep, was now smiling and stretching out its little rounded limbs in apparent comfort.

"We have a handy, active young person in the house, who will be glad, Ma'am, to take charge of little miss and to wait on you, as my master ordered. She'll be here in a few minutes; and, in the meanwhile, I'll just step and make a little panada, for I'm sure, by its yawning, that the little darling is hungry." And off went Mrs. Manley, leaving my parents much pleased with her, and thankful that the kindness of their host would not be thwarted by the ill-will of his confidential servant, as is too often the case in similar circumstances.

Ere half an hour had elapsed, the child had partaken of its panada, which was excellent, and was cooing and smiling as gaily, as if, to use a common phrase, "it had been born with the silver spoon in its mouth," which had so lately fed it: and its parents, thankful to Providence for their recent release from prison and present shelter, tried to be as happy as they were grateful.

CHAPTER IX.

GREAT was Lord Willamere's regret and dissatisfaction when he learned that my mother had left his house. Well knowing her poverty and dependent situation, he had not anticipated her taking this step, and, careless as he in general was with regard to the feelings of others, it is only rendering him justice to state, that, could he have recalled the event that had, as he imagined, led to it, gladly would he have done so. He felt, now, that it was too late to atone for the evil. What an error he had committed in alarming the virtue he had so long wished to undermine. How ill-timed was his rash declaration of love, at a moment when the position of her husband must have engrossed all my mother's thoughts, and excited, even more than usual, all her tenderness; and when *he*, with common tact, ought to have evinced even more than ordinary delicacy and respect in his conduct towards her! Yes; he had grossly committed himself; thrown up the game, as he termed it, when by skilfully playing his cards he might have won it, and, by having given way to the impulse of his mad passion, he had created fear and dislike, where he would have made every sacrifice, save that of his guilty affection, to have excited regard. He blamed the wine he had drank at dinner, for having had so little self-control in his interview with my mother. He cursed his own folly, nay, accused her loveliness, heightened in his eyes by her agitation and tears for her husband, for his own madness in throwing off all disguise, and trying to compel her to listen to his vows. He recalled, with deep emotion, her terrified glance as she shrank from his approach, and the disdain with which she repelled him. Yes, even he, libertine as he was, had been awed by the withering scorn of an insulted and unprotected woman, and, mad as was the passion with which her exquisite beauty had inspired him, he was conscious that his spirit had quailed beneath her reproving glance, and that he dared not again encounter it. How great must be her contempt of *him*, who in the moment of her heavy trial, the arrest of her

husband, when she most needed the solace of sympathy and respect, could violate all the laws of decorum and hospitality, and offer insult to her whom he should have sought to shield from aught approaching it. He struck his temples with his open hand as these thoughts passed through his mind. He accused himself, again and again, of having invaded the sanctity of his own roof, in offending a virtuous woman while beneath it, and almost loathed himself for having, by his mad conduct, driven her to seek shelter elsewhere. And Stratford, too! that worthy, that honest and disinterested man, who had so faithfully served him for years! who had borne, with a delicacy and patience unequalled, the privations which the irregularity and scantiness of the payments made to him must have occasioned! — who was, even now, deprived of his liberty, not for any debt of his own contracting, but for one of the very man who was plotting to injure him in the tenderest point, and who seized the opportunity afforded him by the incarceration of his poor secretary, to outrage his wife by licentious and open avowals of passion! Lord Willamere, although a libertine and a voluptuary, was not wholly destitute of good feeling; and there were moments in his life when the still small voice of conscience would make itself heard, and cause him to regret, that, in the reckless indulgence of his own evil propensities, he had inflicted injury on others. He had not sufficient firmness or self-control to resist temptation, nor moral principle enough to be aware of the enormity of his misdeeds, or of the extent of the evil entailed on others by his transgressions. He really felt a good-will, and no inconsiderable degree of respect towards his secretary, and would, if occasion offered, have rendered him any service in his power; but, while ready to do this, he would not have scrupled to have used every effort to seduce the wife of his bosom, and would have laughed to scorn any attempt to make him sensible of the dishonour and turpitude of such conduct.

Fully convinced that Stratford would have sooner died than connive at any dereliction from virtue in his wife, and

Nothing could exceed the attention evinced by Mr. Manvers towards his guests; and there was such a perfect freedom from ceremony, yet such a respectful deference mingled with his cordiality, that both husband and wife felt that they were welcomed guests, and that their presence, far from imposing any constraint, conferred a pleasure on their host. It was true, he pressed them to partake of the good things set before them, with an earnest warmth that might, at the tables of persons in a more elevated class of life, be deemed homely, if not vulgar; it being now considered, in the highest circles, unnecessary, if not unbecoming, to show that attention towards guests formerly so generally adoptod by hosts and hostesses, who are now content to let the duty of offering the dishes to those assembled at their tables devolve on the servants; they themselves appearing more as guests than masters or mistresses of the feast. But, in the peculiar position of those now at his table, this homely cordiality on the part of Mr. Manvers was very acceptable, and served greatly to put them at their ease. The doting, yet judiciously displayed affection of the widowed father to his little daughters, and their gentleness and docility, conciliated the esteem and good-will of my parents, who felt their confidence in the goodness of heart of their host greatly increased by thus witnessing his unaffected kindness in his domestic circle, and the tenderness of his children toward him. It was long since his visitors had experienced such kindness as they met with beneath the roof of Mr. Manvers. Unskilled in the ceremonious usages of society, this good man allowed his feelings to take their natural course, which led to a warmth of welcome unchecked by the reserve usually maintained towards persons comparatively strangers, on a first visit.

My mother cast many an anxious glance to her husband, whose pallor, and total loss of appetite, alarmed and distressed her; for, although their kind host pressed him to eat, and repeatedly engaged him to do honour to his old sherry, he scarcely touched the good things set before him,

and at length acknowledged that he felt too feverish to venture on drinking wine.

"You must not be cast down, Mr. Stratford," said Mr. Manvers; "only take care of your health, and I will procure you enough occupation, ay, and well paid occupation too, to secure your comfort and independence. I began the world with far less advantages than you possess. I had not your fine education, and, like you, was an orphan. I had nothing but a willing spirit, an active turn of mind, and a thorough conviction of the truth of the old proverb, that honesty is the best policy. The world has prospered with me. I am now well to do in life. If it pleased God to take me away to-morrow, I have wherewithal to provide amply and handsomely for these dear little girls, and have nothing to reproach myself with in the manner in which my fortune has been acquired. Take courage by my example, my good Sir. You are still a young man, with plenty of years before you to work, and leave your little miss as well off as both my girls will be after my death."

The two daughters of Mr. Manvers no sooner heard him utter the word death, than they rose, and with tears in their eyes ran to him, and, clinging to his neck, clasped him in their arms, as if they would shield him from the fell destroyer, whose very name filled their innocent hearts with terror. That terrible name was associated in their youthful minds with the loss of a dearly-loved mother, still fondly remembered. They had seen her fade away, day by day; her cheeks become paler, her eyes more lustrous; they had noticed her voice, always low and gentle, grow still more faint, when, with accents tremulous with love and emotion, she addressed the tender watchers around her couch—that couch she was doomed to leave no more. They saw her still lovely in death, before the coffin-lid shut out that calm pale face for ever from their sight; and they beheld that coffin, covered with its funeral pall, borne from the home, in which her presence had been wont to diffuse happiness. They remembered all this; hence, never did they hear the solemn

word Death, pronounced, that word so often irreverently uttered, without deep emotion; and when their father referred to his own decease they flew to him, as if they could save him from the approach of the King of Terrors.

Mr. Manvers well understood what was passing in their innocent hearts; and *his* thoughts, too, were with the dead, as he pressed with almost womanly fondness his motherless children to his breast.

My father and mother were not indifferent spectators of this little scene. A gloomy presentiment, often the forerunner of danger, flashed through the thoughts of my poor father, as an internal feeling of pain and debility impressed him with a sense of his own ruined health. He looked at his poor wife, bethought himself of how desolate *her* lot would be, and his child too, and tears rushed into his eyes. My mother believed that they arose from sympathy with the feelings of their host, and she loved him the more for this new proof of his sensibility, so perfectly in unison with her own. Had she known the real source of his emotion, how dreadful would have been her state! but "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and she was to be yet for a time spared the wretchedness of knowing the affliction impending over her.

Mr. Manvers had been too well accustomed to watch the incipient approaches of the fearful malady that had snatched from him the wife of his bosom, not to feel some alarm as he marked the pallid brow of Stratford, and the bright hectic spot that frequently showed itself on his cheek.

A cough, that seemed to shake the chest of the sufferer, added to the alarm of his host, while my mother, from never previously having witnessed the insidious approaches of the disease, although anxious about what she believed to be but a temporary indisposition, was wholly ignorant of the extent of the danger that menaced a life infinitely dearer to her than her own. Mr. Manvers immediately called in the best medical aid; but to avoid alarming the patient, arranged that Dr. Rysdale was to drop in, as if by chance, be introduced as a

friend of the host, and, by degrees, gain the confidence of both the husband and wife, and prescribe for the former.

When pressed by my father to inquire about a situation for him, — for the delicacy of the sick man made him recoil from trespassing on the hospitality of his kind friend, — Mr. Manver's would say, "Don't be uneasy, I can find you a situation any day, but you must first re-establish your health; that is the first point to be attended to, every thing else is subordinate to it."

Anxious to render herself useful, and in some way to repay the obligations conferred by Mr. Manvers, Mrs. Stratford devoted three hours of every day to the instruction of his children. Their docility and aptitude in learning, rendered her task a labour of love; and their progress delighted their fond parent so much, that he blessed the hour when he secured them, even for a limited time, the advantages of such an instructress.

But the peacefulness of his asylum, and the kindness of his host, availed not to check the ravages of the disease which was preying on the frame of my father. His cheek became daily more pale and shrunken; his eye more glassy, and his cough more frequent and harassing. Sleep and appetite forsook him; and his physician acknowledged to Mr. Manvers, that the remedies he had hitherto administered had, to his great regret and disappointment, produced no salutary effect. He suggested the propriety of seeking change of air; not, as he admitted, that he hoped any very material change from it; nevertheless it was right, he thought, to try every chance of preserving a life so valuable to Mr. Stratford's wife and child.

Mr. Manvers immediately engaged a house at Brompton, surrounded by a cheerful garden, sent to it many of the comforts so seldom to be found in lodging-houses; and in a very few days after the change of air had been recommended, he announced to the grateful couple that all was ready for their reception at their new abode. "When Mr. Stratford's health

is restored, as I trust in God it soon will be," said the worthy man, "my girls will, with your permission, Madam," addressing my mother, "take up their abode with you, at the house I have taken for you."

Mr. and Mrs. Stratford possessed minds and hearts, not only fully capable of appreciating the generosity and delicacy of Mr. Manvers' conduct towards them, but fully capable of emulating it towards others, had fortune enabled them to do so. The consciousness of this sentiment in their own breasts rendered their sense of obligations to their kind friend less painful and humiliating than if they themselves were less generously disposed; and Mrs. Stratford hoped a day might come, when it would be in her power to prove her deep sense of the favours conferred on her and her husband, in their hour of need.

CHAPTER XI.

Neither my father nor mother were persons who could feel happy while depending solely on the charity or kindness of others. In proportion to the warm sense they entertained of the generosity exercised towards them, was their dread of trespassing too much on it; and while those with less delicacy would have enjoyed the present advantages afforded them, without any scruple, they shrank from the bare idea of encroaching on a hospitality, the value of which no one could better appreciate. They had a spirit of honest independence, as far removed from false pride as from ingratitude, that led them to wish to *earn* their daily bread by their own exertions; and they felt that to live *in idleness*, though even but for a short time, would be too painful and humiliating, owing, as they already did, so mighty an obligation to Mr. Manvers. "Let us at least, for a few days, rest in peace and quiet here, dearest," said my mother, as she marked the pale face and thoughtful brow of her dejected husband; "Mr. Manvers, who is so considerate and kind, may be able to hear of some situation or occupation, by which we

can earn a subsistence. I can, perhaps, through the medium of his extensive connexions and recommendations, go out to give lessons as a daily governess; and with your talents and knowledge, it will be hard, indeed, if we cannot find means to live."

My father tried to smile an assent to his wife's hopes and projects; but the smile was so faint, so sickly, that it indicated how much less sanguine were his expectations than hers. A secret presentiment filled his heart, that the slow fever, occasioned by anxiety, which had so long been undermining his health, and which the events of the last two days had greatly increased, had struck at the vital principle; and as he looked on his adored wife and child, likely to be soon left unprovided for and friendless, in a world in which he had found only endless toil, repaid by deceit and ingratitude, from him for whom he had used his best exertions, a cold shudder came over him, and he almost wished that they, too, might share the sleep of death, which he felt an internal conviction would soon be his. The base conduct of Lord Willamere had wounded my father to the heart's core, and struck at the very root of his life. In vain had he endeavoured to seek a refuge from the bitter thoughts that preyed on his very existence, in the deep contempt which conduct like that of Lord Willamere was so well calculated to inspire in a noble mind and generous heart like his. But his natural sensibility was stronger than his acquired philosophy, and triumphed over every effort which the latter suggested, to pluck forth the poisoned arrow from his heart. My father, too, was a proud, though a poor man, and could ill brook the bitter knowledge, that the wife of his bosom — the only being who had ever loved him, or whom he had loved — should have her name made the subject of slander, or be profaned by the ribald jests of the heartless voluptuaries who associated with the libertine Lord Willamere. And now hope, the delusive syren, had ceased to cheat him. A conviction of his own state, and its probable result, had taken possession of his mind; and the prospect of being torn from his wife and child,

fraught with bitterness, excited his affection for those beloved objects into a morbid tenderness, that served to aggravate the fatal disease that was preying on him. His eyes would follow his wife wheresoever she moved, or dwell on their child, until tears of human fondness, wrung from him by the thought that he must soon leave those dear beings, would fill them.

There is a love, so deep, so devoted, that the thought of leaving the object of it is too terrible to be entertained, even for a moment; and the heart turns with the same instinctive shudder from such a possibility, as the body shrinks from the scalpel of the surgeon who comes prepared to perform some horrible operation on it. Such was the love of my mother for her husband. Not a change in his pale face, not an alteration in his burning hand, escaped her; and every symptom in his malady was noted with a fearful exactness, that proved but too well how she marked the phases of it. Yet, though she saw him day after day grow more weak, and heard the cruel cough that shook his poor chest, as if it would burst it, she dared not anticipate the terrible result of all this suffering, and clung to hope, though there was no longer anchorage for it. Oh! how the fear of parting increases affection, those only can tell who have experienced the agony of beholding the person dearest in life in danger. Then it is, that the chain of affection seems newly rivetted, as if to resist the possibility of being rent asunder; and that the love previously felt, however fond, however true, appears light in comparison with the actual present, when to all the past is added the vague, but terrible dread of the future; that future, when even the happiness of watching over the invalid may be denied, and the cold grave may contain the form for which no couch that love can smooth, is now deemed sufficiently soft.

"No, it won't, it can't be," would my mother say to herself, when some fearful anticipation of losing her adored husband almost made her heart die within her tortured breast. "It would be too, too terrible. God is too good, too merci-

ful, to try me so far beyond my strength to bear. No; he will not be taken from me. He may live, denied the blessing of health, and all its enjoyments; be a helpless invalid, confined to one chamber; but this, even this, will be happiness to me, compared with the dread, the horror of losing him for ever; of feeling alone, in a cold and pitiless world, after having known the blessing, the unutterable blessing, of a love like his."

The day arrived that my father was to be removed from the house of Mr. Manvers to the one taken for him at Brompton. A hired carriage, of the most easy and comfortable kind that could be procured, was engaged to convey him, into which he was assisted by his kind friend, with two of his clerks, and propped up by pillows; and his head resting on the shoulder of his wife, the female servant and child occupying the opposite seat of the vehicle, he was driven towards Brompton.

It was a bright and beautiful day. The streets were filled with gaily dressed persons; innumerable carriages and equestrians were passing along on every side, which gave the air of a *fête* day to the whole scene. What a contrast did it offer to the feelings of the hapless pair, who turned from it with sadness, as if the bright sunshine and gaiety around them increased their sense of the desolation of their own hearts. What to them were the emblazoned carriages whirled along by proud and stately steeds; the gaudy-liveried menials that belonged to them; and the richly dressed occupants, who bestowed not even a passing glance on the humble vehicle that was conveying them to the quiet home where they were to await the sentence that was to decide the fate of both, the sentence of life or death to my father! This pair, in the midst of a gay and busy population, each member of which was occupied solely with his or her own cares, or pleasures, felt that *they* were alone. Shut out from the sympathies of those among whom they glided, they were, as some poor and humble stream that flows into the ocean, lost and confounded in the vast mass into which they were plunged, and

they instinctively pressed closer to each other, as this conviction forced itself on their minds. Their passage was obstructed by the crowd around the gates at Hyde Park, assembled in the hope of seeing the Sovereign pass, and for some minutes their carriage could not move on. My mother would fain have escaped the careless and indifferent glances of the gay personages, whose eyes, for a brief moment, rested on the pale face of her husband, and then turned, with an altered expression, to hers, — for beauty, however chastened by sorrow, is always attractive to the idle loungers of fashion; but she dreaded to avert her head, lest the movement should derange that of the dear invalid resting on her shoulder, and so only cast down her eyes when the inquisitive and impertinent gaze of the equestrians, who peered into the carriage, caused the blood to mount to her delicate cheek.

"Look there, Willamere; did you ever behold a more lovely face?" exclaimed a fashionable looking man to his companion, directing his attention to the humble vehicle of my parents; "by Jove! the sick man is to be envied, for possessing so beautiful a nurse."

Lord Willamere turned quickly round, ever anxious in his search for beauty, and his glance met the death-like face of his poor secretary, whose languid eye rested for a moment on his countenance, and then closed, as if to shut out some object too painful to be longer contemplated. A momentary pang shot through the libertine's heart, as his eye took in the face of the dying man, for that my father was dying, he felt as convinced as of his own identity. From him his eyes turned to the face of my mother, which, though still beautiful as ever, was impressed with such care and sadness, as proclaimed that she had suffered much since they had last met. She had not seen Lord Willamere, for, distressed by the gaze of his companion, she had avoided again looking in the direction where he was; but her husband had recognised him, and the shudder that shook his frame alarmed her so much, that she feared some sudden change for the worse in his health had occasioned it. "It was only a spasm, dearest,"

replied my father, in answer to her inquiry, "I shall be better when we are out of this crowd."

The sight of the man he had loved and trusted, but who had so basely betrayed the confidence he had reposed in his honour, greatly agitated the weak frame of the poor invalid, and although he struggled to conquer his emotion, and named not the subject to his wife, it became evident to her that some sudden change had occurred, which deteriorated his previous state. Lord Willamere looked no more towards the carriage which contained those he had so deeply injured. Remorse, an unsual visitor in his heart, had found entrance, and his aspect underwent such an alteration, that when his companion again demanded his opinion of the beautiful woman he had pointed out, he asked him if he felt unwell.

"Only a slight head-ache," was the answer. A slight heart-ache, would have been nearer the truth.

"I've a great mind to follow the carriage and discover where this beauty dwells," said Sir Henry Riverstock.

"You will gain nothing by it," observed Lord Willamere, "for the lady is evidently a modest woman."

"No other would be worth the trouble of pursuit," was the reply, "forbidden fruit alone is tempting."

"But even so warm an admirer of beauty and modesty as Sir Henry Riverstock, might pause before he subjects a woman in affliction, as the one we have just seen evidently is, to annoyance by a pursuit wholly unencouraged by even a glance of hers," rejoined the peer.

There was a sarcastic severity in the tone and manner of Lord Willamere, as he uttered these words, that instantly led his companion to conclude that his lordship had a more than ordinary interest in the fair unknown. His sudden change of countenance the moment after he saw her, and his ill-dissembled anxiety to prevent him from following her carriage confirmed his suspicions, and decided him on pursuing the bent of his own inclinations, by keeping the vehicle in view.

"I had no notion, my dear Willamere," said the baronet,

"that you were so considerate of the feelings of those who attract your admiration, as your advice just now given would lead me to suppose. Come, be frank and own the truth. Have you not tried to dissuade me from following this *belle incognito*, merely because you intend to take a similar step yourself?"

Lord Willamere, albeit unused to blush, felt his cheeks glow at this charge; but recovering his self-possession, he asserted on his word of honour that he had no such intention.

"Then you have more self-control, or less admiration for the lady than I possess," observed Sir Henry Riverstock, "so adieu;" and he turned his horse's head towards the road to Kensington, the direction which the carriage in which my parents were had taken, and soon overtook it. He had, however, sufficient sense, if not delicacy, to remain behind the carriage, desirous of not offending the lovely woman it contained, until he reached the spot where the road leads off on the left to Brompton, where he met Mr. Addington, one of the *roué* cronies of Lord Willamere. This gentleman had seen and recognised my parents, and the encounter had brought back fresh to his mind his having formerly met them at Willamere House, and the scandal that Lord Henry Middlecourt and he had then imagined, and afterwards circulated relative to the supposed *liaison* between Lord Willamere and the handsome Mrs. Stratford, as also of the secretary's connivance at the intrigue.

"How-d'ye-do, Riverstock," exclaimed Mr. Addington. "I've just seen in that fly," pointing to the one in front, "a devilish beautiful woman; a flame of Willamere's, and the wife of his secretary, who, *par parenthèse*, looks as if he is not likely to trouble his frail rib long with his presence. The poor devil is evidently dying."

"Hah! hah! my Lord Willamere, I have caught you, have I?" soliloquized Sir Henry Riverstock. "This explains your anxiety to prevent my following the carriage of the fair one. Would you believe it, Addington, when I pointed out the lady in question to Willamere, believing that he had never

seen her before, the sly dog affected not to know her; and when I proposed to ride after her carriage in order to discover her abode, he preached me as moral a lesson as if he were a saint, and I only a sinner. But are you quite sure, my dear fellow, that the lady is the person you assert her to be?"

"Perfectly. I recognised her at one glance. Indeed she is too pretty to be easily mistaken for another. I once passed some hours in her company, much to her dissatisfaction, I dare be sworn, for she looked deucedly put out of her way by the intrusion of Henry Middlecourt and myself into the dining-room of Willamere, where she, her *cara sposo*, and his lordship, made a trio at dessert, quite *en famille*. Willamere wished us anywhere else, I could plainly see, and endeavoured to dupe us, by assuming towards the lady as deferential an air as if she were a duchess, instead of the wife of his secretary; who, poor man, was enjoying his fruit to all appearance wholly unconscious that he stood in a peculiarly false position, as either a dishonourable, or a deceived husband."

"I am sorry I must leave you," said Sir Henry Riverstock, "for I have an engagement, so good bye."

"A *bonne fortune*, I conclude," was the reply; "for those are the only engagements men attend to in our times;" and off rode Mr. Addington to London, while the baronet galloped briskly after the carriage which held the object that had excited so great an interest in his breast.

When some days before Lord Willamere had paid away the money to Mr. Wilkinson, the horse-dealer, and secured the horses, agreeing to give an increased yearly stipend for their hire on job, in consideration of the great price that person alleged he had given for them, he rode away in a different direction from that which he had originally intended taking. It was now useless, he felt, to see Mr. Spellerman, as he had no longer the money to give him to liberate my father. "Well, after all, a few days more or less incarceration can't be of much consequence to him," thought the peer, "a lock-up house is, I understand, no very bad place — a sort of ready-furnished lodging, as I have heard, only different from others,

inasmuch as the lodger is not permitted to leave it until the proprietor is quite satisfied that there is no detainer remaining there against him. Heaven be praised, I have no personal experience of those sort of places! Glorious privilege of the peerage! which keeps us, the porcelain of human clay, safe from such contamination. Yes, I dare say Stratford has his comforts around him; his beautiful wife by his side! Who would not submit to a prison to secure a *tête-à-tête* with such a creature? He is not much to be pitied with such a companion. Yet husbands are such strange dogs, especially after a year of marriage, that a prison might seem to a benedict no less gloomy with a wife than without one. I'll certainly relieve poor Stratford the moment I receive the money from Mr. Humphry, and that must be in a few days. *En attendant*, I will think no more of him, which will be much the wisest plan, for boring myself about his imprisonment can do *him* no good, and would only put me into the blue devils. I certainly am a devilish kind-hearted fellow in the main, for I have had no fewer than a dozen disagreeable twinges of conscience since poor Stratford was arrested on my account; and if I had not so much philosophy as I possess, I should really have been as gloomy as a gamester on awaking in the morning, after he has lost his last guinea. Yes, philosophy is a marvellously good thing in such emergencies. It consoles us wonderfully in the misfortunes that befall our friends. It is a pity it is not so successful in those that assail ourselves."

An organ, played by an Italian boy, at that moment struck up a merry tune, and this incident, so trifling in itself, gave an entire change to the thoughts of Lord Willamere. Strange power of music, to abstract us from the actual present, and transport us to other scenes! The tune was a favourite one with the Duchess of Rosehampton, and Willamere had, during the heyday of his passion for that lovely, but erring woman, often danced with her to its measure. A vision of her sparkling eyes and sweet smile at such moments flashed on his memory, and he bethought him of his past triumphs, when, envied by half the men who helped to fill the gilded *salons de*

bal in the great houses in London, he led the lovely duchess, sparkling in diamonds, and "the observed of all observers," through the mazy dance. There had been more of sentiment in Willamere's unhallowed *liaison* with the Duchess, than in any other of his numerous *bonne fortunes*. The reason was, that she was not as lightly won as his other conquests. Poor woman! Nature meant her to be something better than a mere leader of the ton; one of those heartless, soulless butterflies, who bask in the sunshine of fashion, and waste their lives in its frivolous pursuits and pleasures.

Left an orphan while yet in infancy, she had, unhappily, no watchful mother to instill precepts of religion and morality into her mind, to watch over her youth, and to guide her through the perils that beset the path of the young and fair. She had no father or brother to shield her from the advances of the worthless or designing, or to warn her ere she irrevocably bestowed her hand on one undeserving the boon. Left to the guardianship of a distant relation, who thought he was conscientiously fulfilling the charge consigned to him, when he engaged a governess, strongly recommended by a lady of high rank, to preside over the instruction of his fair ward, and duly attended to the care of her large fortune, the Lady Adelaide St. John grew up to be an accomplished woman. She was an admirable musician; drew in a masterly style; danced almost too well for a lady, as many matrons with daughters less skilled in the science of Terpsichore, and the said daughters themselves, averred; rode like an amazon; walked like a Diana; and was so naturally graceful, that her every movement enhanced the rare beauty of her face and figure. But while no pains nor expense were spared in perfecting her accomplishments, her moral training had been wholly neglected. With warm feelings, a kind heart, and its too frequent accompaniment, a quick temper, she was never taught to regulate the first, nor to control the latter. She would melt with pity over a tale of distress, yet the next moment inflict pain by some ebullition of anger occasioned by a trifle. She wished all around her to be happy, would have willingly made

any sacrifice to accomplish this, was incapable of any malice, but expected, as a right, that she herself was to be also exempt from the ills to which human flesh are heirs. She was impatient under the trials that await even the most favoured of Fortune's pets, and resented as a personal injury any *contre temps* that militated against her schemes of pleasure. There was so much goodness in her nature, that a skilful hand might have easily eradicated the weeds that had sprung up in the too rich soil; but unfortunately Madame de Tremonville was the last person in the world to discover their roots, or, even had she marked them, to pluck them out. The warmth of her pupil's feelings she cherished, rather than attempted to regulate. Her kindness of heart she loved, nay, almost idolized her for, because innumerable and gratifying proofs of it were continually evinced towards herself; and her quickness of temper was tolerated, if not encouraged, as demonstrative of genius, which Madame de Tremonville declared was always accompanied by a certain vivacity of temper, as is exemplified by the term "*genus irritabile*," always applied to clever persons.

Married while yet little more than a child, the duke, though tenderly attached to her, was so wholly engrossed by politics as to have little time to devote to his beautiful and inexperienced wife, who, left without a guide to advise, or a friend to guard her, soon became engulphed in the vortex of fashion.

Such was the woman who had fallen a prey to the artful and practised seducer, Lord Willamere; and who, haunted by the remorse which never fails, sooner or later, to follow unhallowed *liaisons*, now wept in anguish her lapse from virtue, and the ingratitude of him who, having been "loved, not wisely but too well," had lured her from it. Fierce was the war which love, pride, and remorse waged in her tortured breast, even while yet her seducer, unsated by possession, proved by his unremitting attention, the passion he felt for her. Every hour of his absence found her wretched. She trembled before the unsuspecting husband, whose honour

she had betrayed in forfeiting her own. Every word of kindness from him seemed like a dagger plunged into her heart, and made her feel ready to fall at his feet, avow her guilt, and draw on her head all its humiliating, its fearful consequences. Her depression of spirits, her altered looks, the traces of tears so often visible on her pale cheeks, alarmed, and excited a fresh interest in her fond husband, every proof of which inflicted agony on the wretched woman. She hardly dared to meet his glance, and fancied that even indifferent spectators could read on her brow the stamp of shame. She trembled before her servants; for they, as she rightly imagined, must have formed their own conclusions on the frequency of Lord Willamere's visits, and of her interviews with him in Kensington Gardens. Such had been the state of her feelings for some time, when her lover, who had been of late so remiss in his attentions as to alarm her pride, and wound her affection, surprised her by a visit. The vision his memory had conjured up, by the aid of the tune played by the organ in the street, had induced this tardy visit. He cheated himself into the expectation of finding her radiant in beauty as before tears of repentance had stained her cheeks, and dimmed the lustre of her eyes, and he fancied that, after a few reproaches, uttered more in sorrow than in anger, she would accept the falsehoods he meant to urge in extenuation of his neglect. But her changed aspect, her impaired beauty, and evidently destroyed health, which might have awakened pity in the sternest breast, excited only anger in his callous one. He reproached, instead of attempting to soothe her. Asked how she could hope that after having committed the suicide of her own beauty, she could retain the heart it had enthralled, and whether any lover could give up his time to one who was always steeped in tears. The indignation of the duchess was for some time too great for words — to be taunted by *him* who had plunged her into guilt and shame, who had steeped her nightly pillow, to which sleep was now a stranger, in tears, was not to be borne. "Begone," said she, when words found utterance; "never again presume to

appear before me. I loathe myself for having stooped to love one so heartless, so worthless; and my turpitude is increased tenfold in my own eyes, by the discovery that you have no one quality to extenuate my crime."

Angered beyond the power of gentlemanly forbearance, Lord Willamere arose to depart. "Remember," said he spitefully, "that when your ill-humour has ceased, you may find that I am not to be recalled," and he left the room.

* * * *

Great was the regret next day, when the sudden death of the young and beautiful Duchess of Rosehampton was announced. Her grace had complained of indisposition when she went to dress for dinner; grew worse, and found herself unable to leave her chamber. She refused to permit a physician to be sent for, and was found a corpse next morning when her *femme de chambre* entered her room. An empty bottle, marked "Laudanum," discovered by her bed-side, revealed the cause of her death. She had of late become compelled to have recourse to it to procure sleep, and, urged to desperation, had in a moment of phrenzy swallowed its contents.

Her husband mourned her long and deeply; and, ignorant of her sin and its results, believed that the over-dose which produced her death had been taken through mistake. Young, beautiful, blessed with rank, wealth, and so fondly beloved by him, he could not imagine a cause for her committing suicide. No, she must have taken the deadly potion without being aware of its strength, and he must ever regret her loss. There were, however, some who but too well guessed the truth. One was the *femme de chambre*, who saw her, pale as marble, and deluged in tears, enter with unsteady steps her dressing-room, a few minutes after Lord Willamere had left the house. *She* marked the look of utter despair which revealed what was passing in the broken heart of her mistress, when the duchess desired to be left alone that fatal night; and so impressed was she by a dread of some impending catastrophe, that, had the duke been at home, she

would have confessed her fears that it was not safe to have the duchess left alone. Unfortunately, the duke was at the House of Lords, and returned not until all was over. Although the suspicion that a guilty attachment existed between their lady and Lord Willamere had long been excited in the minds of the servants, such was the good-will her gentleness and goodness had created in their breasts, and so strong was the respect they entertained for the duke, that no whisper ever betrayed the secret. The *femme de chambre*, who had for some time marked the unhappiness of the duchess, and surmised the cause, would have died sooner than breathe a word that could darken her fame, or lead the betrayed and bereaved husband to suspect, that the wife whose sudden death he so deeply deplored, had been unworthy of his affection. It was remarked that whenever by chance Lord Willamere's name was mentioned in her presence, she would turn deadly pale, and a shudder would pass over her frame; but when questioned why this occurred, she would give some excuse, and change the subject. The sudden death of the duchess greatly shocked Lord Willamere. He had anticipated no such tragical catastrophe, and for some time it affected his spirits, and he blamed himself for his unkindness at their last interview. But after a few months she was thought of no more, save when a street organ happened to play her favourite air, and then he would turn pale and sigh. The tune, however, like all other ones, became old-fashioned, and ceased to be played by the organs, so he was released from this last reminder of her whose peace he had destroyed, and whom he had driven to self-destruction.

CHAPTER XII.

We left Sir Henry Riverstock following the carriage that contained Mr. and Mrs. Stratford. He had the tact and decency not to come so near it as to be seen by its occupants; and as he observed it stop in front of the garden-gate of a

small but neat cottage, into which the invalid was assisted by his wife and a female servant, he stopped his horse until they had time to pass into the house, and then, having noted the locality, he retraced his route to the Park. The intelligence of the supposed frailty of the fair object of his pursuit, conveyed by Mr. Addington, only served to encourage the evil designs excited by her beauty in the mind of the libertine baronet. Why might not *he* seek to please, and win her smiles, as well as Lord Willamere had done? Was *he* not as good-looking, much younger, and richer than his lordship? and why therefore not aspire to the same success? So reasoned Sir Henry Riverstock, as he slowly rode back to the Park, his thoughts occupied by the lovely woman he had seen, and bent on leaving no effort untried to gain her favour. This incipient passion did not, however, deter him from examining every pretty woman he saw in the Park, as if each not personally known to him were an attainable object; or in fact, as if the women were, like horses exposed in a dealers yard, led forth to be exhibited to the highest bidder.

"*She* is handsomer, a thousand times handsomer than any of them," said he to himself. "What a lucky fellow Willamere was to have won her, and in the meridian of her beauty too, before she had become so pale and delicate as at present. But this paleness and delicacy will subside when she comes to be no longer constantly immured with that sickly husband of hers. The being shut up with such an unhealthy fellow is enough to make any woman look ill. It is like renewing the old story of Mezentius, chaining the living to the dead, to have such fine a creature tied to that poor faded shrunken skeleton, who has scarcely a breath of life left in his body. I'll write to her at once. Or, let me see, shall I wait a little? Her husband can't last long, and women's hearts are said to be peculiarly softened during the first days of widowhood."

Thus reflected the sensual and libertine Sir Henry Riverstock, to whom a doubt of the truth of the statement of Mr. Addington never occurred. Indeed, he seldom questioned

any scandalous story, for, judging of the mass of mankind by self, he was prone to give credence to every evil that could be imputed to it.

It is long since we left Mr. and Mrs. Stratford entering the abode near Brompton, provided for them by their kind and considerate friend, Mr. Manvers. In it they found every comfort that an invalid could require, and both husband and wife, as they looked around on the neat and cheerful rooms, and into the garden, gay with flowers, and enlivened by the carols of innumerable birds, mentally blessed him to whom they owed so much.

"The pure air and quiet of this sweet place, will, with the blessing of God, restore you," said the doting wife, as she looked fondly and anxiously at the pale face and sunken eyes of her husband.

He shook his head sorrowfully, but spoke not, and turned away to hide his emotion. Oh! what a pang shot through his wife's heart at that moment, as his conviction of the utter hopelessness of his case was revealed to her by his silence, and the emotion he tried to conceal. She struggled to master her feelings and assume a calm demeanour, while her heart was torn by grief and dread; but a tremulous movement of her lips, and an increased paleness of her face, betrayed what she felt.

Day after day, did she examine with the watchful eyes of love, the altered aspect of her husband. The pure air and quiet, on which she had so much counted for effecting a beneficial change in his state, had failed to produce the desired end, and each hour saw him become more deathly pallid, more emaciated, and more languid than before; while a cough that shook his feeble frame, but too well proclaimed that consumption, that most terrible of maladies, was making rapid strides in its destructive progress to end his life. He would lay for hours dozing on a sofa in the chamber, so death-like, that his labouring breath alone proved he was still a denizen of earth, and his wife would fix her eyes on that pale brow, and those sharply chiselled features which the finger of

approaching Death had already touched, as if to imprint them on her memory, while tears, bitter, burning tears, would chase each other down her cheeks.

Often would the pallid sleeper murmur her name in a tone of such deep tenderness, as to thrill through her heart, while heavy sighs heaved his breast, and proved that even in slumber, he was haunted by the thought of their coming separation. At such moments she would look from the sleeping father to his slumbering child. The one with the pallor of death on his brow, marking how fleetly the sands of life were ebbing, and the other rosy, plump, and dimpled, smiling in its dreams, unconscious of the state of the authors of its being, and of the fate impending over them.

"Could I but preserve him, even thus," Mrs. Stratford would say, as she gazed on her husband, "I would be content. To watch over him as now; to guard his slumbers from interruption; to minister to his wants; — oh! it would be happiness! But to know that the dear face I am now looking on will soon be hidden from my eyes for ever, that, shut from the light of day in the dark and narrow grave, the worms will prey on it, and decay deface those fair lineaments, — O God! O God! the bitterness of death is in such thoughts, and reason staggers beneath a load of anguish too heavy to be borne. Would to heaven that our helpless child and I were summoned to accompany my husband to the grave! Pardon me, O merciful Father, if weak and sinful, I shrink from the cup of bitterness *thou* hast willed I should drink to the very dregs. Have mercy on me, and take me and the child that thou hast given me hence, for I have not courage to live after the grave shall have closed over my husband."

How mournful and tender were the communings of the dying husband and doting wife, during the days that intervened between their earthly separation. How did he, full of faith in the divine mercy of his heavenly father, endeavour to reconcile her to the inevitable blow that would leave her a lonely mourner on earth, and a dependant on the kindness of Mr. Manvers. But though the pious resignation of the

Christian was exerted to chasten the grief of the fond husband and father, it could not always subdue the anguish with which he contemplated a separation from those so dear to him. He would, when he believed himself unobserved, gaze on his wife and child until tears blinded him, and he would turn his face away to conceal his emotion, lest it might inflict a fresh pang on the tender nurse who seldom left his pillow.

One day, when the weather was more than usually sultry, and that its enervating effect made itself felt by an increased languor and exhaustion of his debilitated frame, his wife, while using a fan to cool his fevered brow, said she longed for the fresh breezes of autumn to bring restored health to him.

"Alas! dearest, health will never more visit me," replied he. "Cheat not yourself, my Emily, with illusive hopes. I shall leave you before the first autumnal breeze sweeps the leaves from those trees we both daily look on."

"Say not, oh! say not so, William," and the speaker arose and pressed him in her arms, as if to preserve him from the grasp of the destroyer Death, while a torrent of tears bathed her cheeks. "You will yet recover. The Almighty will take pity on me, and knowing my weakness will not try me beyond my strength of endurance. Oh! William, I could not part from you, I could not see you die!" and the frame of the wretched wife shook in agony. Never previously had she dared to contemplate the terrible result of the malady that she saw day by day making such fearful inroads on the life of her husband. That he was in danger, in imminent danger, she could not conceal from herself, though, with the delusion peculiar to love in such cases, she refused to believe the possibility of the calamity which menaced her. It was too dreadful to be supported even in thought; and if for a moment it suggested itself, her terrified imagination shrunk from it, and, with a shudder, she would say, "Oh! no; God is too good. *He*, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and the weakness of his poor sinful children, knows that such a blow

would indeed overwhelm me, and leave my poor child doubly an orphan."

But now to hear from his own lips a confirmation of fears too terrible to be admitted, even in thought, struck her to the heart, and sounded a funeral knell to departed hope. No longer could she cheat herself, or shut her eyes to the dreadful truth; and with this conviction came a stunning sense of despair and desolation, that almost deprived her of the power to quell the demonstrations of her agony, which she felt must inflict such pain on her husband.

"I feared this, my poor Emily," said he, "and have long wished, but had not courage, to prepare you for what is inevitable. Remember that we part not for ever, that life soon passes, that you will follow me, and that we shall, through the mercy of our blessed Redeemer, be hereafter reunited where no more partings are."

How eagerly did her ears drink in the sounds of that dear voice, soon to be hushed in the silence of death! Was it indeed possible that his days were numbered? that soon the dark grave would hide from her view that dear face, now beaming on her with unutterable love? She could not speak. Every attempt to pronounce even a single word brought on a sence of suffocation that threatened to overpower her. So, mute and motionless, save by the quick rising of her agitated breast, she remained plunged in grief.

Oh! how overwhelming is the first conviction that the object dearest to us on earth is about to be snatched from us for ever! How do we gaze on those features that must soon be shut out from our sight, how listen to those accents that never uttered an unkind word, and which will soon meet our ears no more! The deep emotion of her husband had so exhausted his weak frame that he sank into a gentle sleep, during which his unhappy wife found a momentary relief in tears. They flowed long and silently. She suffered no sob to escape from her oppressed heart, nor did her tearful eyes turn from the pale and attenuated face before her; which, save for the motion produced by his quick respiration, might have been

mistaken for that of the dead. The door of the chamber opened, and the female servant who waited on Mrs. Stratford entered with a letter addressed to her. "It was brought by a groom, Ma'am," whispered she, "who said he would call to-morrow for an answer." Having made a sign to her not to disturb the sleeper, Mrs. Stratford put the letter into her pocket without bestowing a thought on whom it might come from, nor did it occur to her memory again until the next day, when the maid came to inform her that the servant who had brought the letter the previous day, had called, and was waiting for an answer.

"What letter, dearest?" asked her husband.

"I had totally forgotten it," replied his wife, drawing it from her pocket with its seal unbroken.

"I thought we had been forgotten by all, except our kind friend, Mr. Manvers," observed Mr. Stratford, as he looked at his wife, who opened the letter with an indifference and carelessness that betokened how little interest it occasioned; but soon her aspect changed — her pale cheek became crimsoned, her eyes darted glances of anger and indignation, and in a voice tremulous with emotion, she told the servant that there was no answer.

"Something in that letter has moved, has agitated you, Emily. Is it as I suspect? Has that unprincipled man, Lord Willamere, whom I saw in Piccadilly the day we were coming here, discovered our abode, and again renewed his insults?"

The face of the speaker, previously pale as death, was now flushed by indignation, and his hand trembled as he held it forth for the letter.

"It is not from that bad man, my dear William, I assure you it is not."

"Then why did its perusal agitate and distress you, my own Emily?"

"The least thing agitates me of late," replied Mrs. Stratford, endeavouring to assume a careless air, though trembling lest her husband should insist upon seeing the letter,

which would, she was well aware, excite emotions most injurious in his weak state.

"Let me read it, Emily?" and he held out his hand eagerly for the letter.

"Do not read it, dear William. Oblige me by not insisting on it."

"We have too short a time to be together, my poor love, for me to forego one of the dear privileges you accorded me when you blessed me with your hand, that of having no secrets between us."

"But this odious letter will only vex you. I know not its vile writer, and why should we bestow a single thought on him or it?"

"I will see it, Emily!" and the sick man, with an impatience very unusual in him, and which was probably the effect of the fever preying on his exhausted frame, motioned to have the letter given to him. Fearing that a continued opposition to his wishes might be as injurious as a perusal of the hated epistle, his wife resigned it to his trembling hand, her own as tremulous; but scarcely had his eyes glanced over the first few lines, ere his face became suffused with the red blush of wounded pride and indignation, even to his very temples, and he sunk back exhausted, and gasping for breath, on his pillow. A violent paroxysm of coughing rapidly ensued, which terribly shook his frame, and was followed by an ensanguined stream, which gushed from his mouth, threatening immediate death by suffocation. The cries of his distracted wife brought a servant to her aid. A messenger was dispatched for the next medical man, who was soon in attendance, and who tried, but, alas! in vain, to stay the ebbing tide of life, for ere an hour had elapsed, he had ceased to breathe. No tears, no groan, marked the bereaved wife's sense of the calamity that had befallen her. Pale, and motionless as a statue, with her eyes fixed on the face of the departed, and his lifeless hand still clasped convulsively in hers, she seemed unconscious that he was indeed gone for ever, and heedless of the reiterated requests of the

doctor and the servant, that she should retire to another room. But when with a gentle force they endeavoured to remove her from the spot, she resisted their efforts with an unnatural strength for so slight a frame, and breaking from their arms, she threw herself on the body of her husband, and clasping it wildly to her breast, fell into strong convulsions. Though accustomed to such trying scenes of grief, the overwhelming agony he here witnessed made a deep impression on Mr. Dawkins, the surgeon, and he used every effort that his skill and experience could suggest, to afford relief to his patient. But the fiat had gone forth, and human skill was vain. At the expiration of three days she ceased to suffer, and her pure and spotless soul fled to join that of the husband she had so fondly, truly loved, leaving their helpless child as a mournful legacy to the pity of Mr. Manvers, the only sincere friend its unhappy parents had ever known. He was faithful to the trust, and having attended their cold remains to a neighbouring cemetery with every observance of respect, and seen them interred in one grave, he took the orphan to his house, where, provided with all comfort, she was tended with as much care as if she had been his own child. When old enough to receive tuition she was sent to an excellent school, it being the intention of her benefactor that she should be brought up as a governess.

To render her fit for this situation, no expense was saved, and during the years that intervened ere she was deemed sufficiently accomplished to instruct others, she continued to have every kindness lavished on her by her generous friend and his family. When arrived at an age to comprehend her position, (I trust my readers will permit me to avoid the egotistical *I*, and write of myself as if I wrote of another,) Mr. Manvers revealed to her the particulars of the sad story, and premature deaths of her parents. He painted in bright and unfading colours, the virtues and misfortunes of the amiable and ill-fated pair. He loved to dwell on every detail connected with them, that brought forth more strikingly

their virtues and noble qualities; and while doing so, the history of their wrongs, all of which were well known to him, was exposed to her. The heartlessness, and utter selfishness of those among whom the destiny of her father had been cast, filled her mind with disgust and dread, but it also strengthened and steeled it against the illusions to which youth is prone.

At an age when young girls see only the bright side of life, she was impressed with a conviction that the heirs of poverty are born to endure many and heavy trials; and that fortitude and resignation, which can alone enable them to support such evils, must be assiduously cultivated, as a spirit of discontent and repining will but increase the sense of them.

The same fatal disease that had snatched away the wife of Mr. Manvers, deprived him of his children, when they had become old enough to be his friends, as well as companions. It was on these trying occasions that the orphan he had protected was enabled to prove most strongly her gratitude and devotion. She nursed the sick with unwearying attention and tenderness, and soothed the bereaved father when his offspring were taken from him, with an assiduity which, if it could not heal the deep wounds inflicted on his peace, served at least to mitigate his sense of their anguish.

Fortune, that blind goddess, who seems to delight in persecuting those least able to resist her shafts, and who had so sternly frowned on her parents, had reserved some of her arrows to pierce the orphan they had left behind, and that too when her only friend, the worthy Mr. Manvers, was on the point of securing to her a provision, that would have precluded her from ever experiencing the ills that wait on poverty. Having amassed a large fortune, and no longer blessed with those dear objects for whom he had laboured to acquire it, he determined on bequeathing it to her whom he had befriended. His only near relative was a sister, whose character and conduct were so dissimilar to his own, as to have produced a long and serious estrangement between

them. Her extravagance had often involved her in difficulties, from the consequences of which he had several times extricated her, at the cost of heavy pecuniary sacrifices, but his kindness had failed to make a proper impression on her callous heart. He had discovered her ingratitude, and although determined to make a provision that would secure her from want when he should be no more, he, in the warmth of his generous affection, thought his wealth could nowhere be so well bestowed as on the young girl whose attention to his lost offspring, and devotion to himself, had won his regard. He had immediately after the death of her parents added a codicil to his will, bequeathing the sum of two thousand pounds to her. He now determined to destroy this will, and to replace it by another; but the very day he had consigned it to the flames, and gone to his solicitor to give him instructions to prepare another, he found that gentleman had been called into the country, and was not expected to return for some days. "Let me know when he arrives," said Mr. Manvers to the clerk, "for I have business of some importance to consult him on," and he walked away from Lincoln's Inn, his mind filled by the thought of securing his large fortune to the person he most regarded. That evening he made notes of instruction for the drawing of his will, in which an annuity of two hundred a year was to be bequeathed to his sister; half that sum to his worthy housekeeper, a considerable provision to his confidential clerk, and donations to all his other clerks and domestics whose services had entitled them to his esteem. To the orphan was the remainder of his wealth, amounting to no less a sum than sixty thousand pounds, to revert, and he named two of his most respected friends as executors. He signed the sheet of paper on which he had written these notes, and having placed it on his desk, intending to lock it up next morning, retired to his pillow that night with a mind at rest, satisfied at having taken steps to put into execution an intention formed ever since the death of his second daughter. With more virtues than fall to the lot of most men, Mr. Manvers

had one defect, that was a superstitious dread connected with making his will. He thought that death was less likely to visit him while he had made no testamentary arrangement of his affairs; and this weakness, which he hardly acknowledged to himself, had led him from month to month to postpone making a new one. To conquer this disposition to procrastination, of the weakness of which he felt sensible, he had taken the step of committing the will made during the life of his daughter to the flames, and the very next day had gone to his solicitor's to have a new one drawn up in due form. But the truth of the proverb, that "Man proposes, and God disposes," was never more exemplified than in his case; for he never awoke from the sleep into which he fell the night after he had written his notes relative to his will; that calm slumber, before dropping into which, his last thought had been one of self-satisfaction at having, as he thought, so well disposed of his honestly acquired wealth.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next morning, about the hour which Mr. Manvers generally left his chamber, his sister called to seek an interview with him, for the purpose of soliciting pecuniary aid; having, as was her wont, exceeded the quarterly stipend he assigned for her support. She was informed that he had not yet descended, and was shown into a private room at the back of his shop, where he was in the habit of receiving people on business. She had not remained more than a quarter of an hour there, when the shrieks of the housemaid, who rushed down stairs, struck her ear, and hearing the shocked and grief-stricken woman announce to the housekeeper that their dear, their good master was no more, she hurried up to his chamber, and found her brother a corpse! She glanced around; for even the awful sight before her failed to touch her cold and callous heart; and her eyes fell on the paper on the desk near his bedside. In a moment she became conscious of its importance, and seizing it with the

rapidity of lightning, she conveyed it to her pocket before the housekeeper and confidential clerk of the deceased could reach the chamber; and then throwing herself on the bed, and clasping the lifeless body in her arms, she so well simulated a paroxysm of despair and anguish, as to excite the commiseration of those present, although they had previously felt ill-disposed towards her, from knowing the chagrin and trouble she had so frequently inflicted on their departed friend and master. A surgeon who had been sent for on the first alarm, now arrived, and pronounced that life had been for several hours extinct. Mr. Vernon, the head clerk, in the presence of the surgeon, placed seals on all the desks, drawers, &c., and despatched messengers to the two friends whom his late employer had told him were to be his executors.

Mr. Manvers had informed him some time previously, of his intention to bequeath the principal portion of his fortune to the orphan. The worthy housekeeper had likewise been told this by her master, so both now regarded the young girl as the heiress to his wealth; and, having known and loved her since her infancy, they had a satisfaction in her good fortune.

Mrs. Forsythe, the sister of the deceased, so well enacted her *rôle*, as to impose on all present, and convince them that she was a prey to grief. Force was necessary to remove her from the lifeless body of her brother, and so wholly overwhelmed by grief did she appear to be, that the humane and worthy housekeeper proposed having a bed made for her in an adjoining chamber, she having declared, with a frantic vehemence of tenderness, that she would not be denied the sad consolation of remaining near his corpse until it was to be removed for ever from her sight.

Having carried her point of remaining on the spot, and watching that nothing was removed, — for Mrs. Forsythe to her other bad qualities united a degree of suspicion rarely found but in those who, capable themselves of every turpitude, are prone to attribute similar dispositions to all with

whom they come in contact, she swallowed a calming potion, prescribed by the surgeon, and being left alone to try the efficacy of its effect, drew the paper signed by her late brother from its concealment, and carefully perused its contents. The writing and paper looked so fresh, and the circumstance, too, of its laying *on* the desk, with the pen still in the ink-bottle by its side, struck her as proofs that the document in her hand had only been indited the previous night, before her brother had sought that pillow whence it was decreed by the Almighty that he was to rise no more. She trembled with emotion as the possibility that this might be his only testamentary disposition occurred to her; and a thrill of joy and triumph passed through her mind at the thought that it was secure in her possession, and unknown to any one else. Oh, if it should prove to be so! If no other will could be found among his papers, or at his solicitor's, how might she benefit by having discovered and secreted it! How fortunate was it that she had been urged by want to visit the deceased that morning; that she was on the spot at the identical time; had been the first to enter his chamber, or at least that side of it where his writing-desk stood, and had time to hide the important paper. Yes, if no will could be found she — she, the sister he disliked, the object of his charity, who had come that very morning to crave a further extension of it, ashamed to meet his cold glance and reproachful eye at this new proof of her improvidence! Yes, she would, in default of a will being found, become the natural heiress to all his wealth, and his *protégée*, Miss Stratford, for whom he intended to defraud her, his nearest relation, his own sister, would be left a dependent on the bounty of *her* whom probably she had been taught to undervalue, if not to despise! Oh! there was happiness in the very thought of attaining the wealth her heart had long pined for, and of which she had so often envied her brother the possession! *She* would not, like him, toil on to increase the ample store he had amassed. No, she would make it minister to those gratifications of which she had but too long been deprived; she would revel in those luxuries and

pleasures she longed to enjoy; and the wealth, for the attainment of which he had so strictly attended to business for years, and denied himself so many indulgences, she, yes, she whom he had reprehended, and to whom he had doled out a stinted stipend, would reap the benefit of all his parsimony and industry. And the heartless woman smiled in triumphant anticipation of those riches she hoped to enjoy.

But if a former will had not been destroyed! Ah! there was the rub; and she trembled as the possibility of this again crossed her mind. She determined that she would continue to enact the *rôle* of a mourning sister, so successfully commenced, excite the good-will and sympathy of those around her, who entertained so deep a respect for her departed brother; so that in case her worst fears were realized by the existence of a will, she might, by conciliating the good opinion of the legatee, or legatees, derive some pecuniary advantage from them. She controlled herself sufficiently to appear wholly absorbed in grief, and so well did she play her part, that she succeeded in duping the worthy individuals who had an opportunity of witnessing her assumed chagrin.

The result is soon told. No will could be found. Selina Stratford was left without any provision; and Mrs. Forsythe, the cold, calculating, and selfish Mrs. Forsythe, became the inheritress of the large fortune of her brother.

No sooner was it ascertained that Mrs. Forsythe was indeed the legal inheritress of her brother's fortune, than she threw off the mask of grief she had previously assumed, and boldly asserted her rights. She demanded an exact account of the possessions that had devolved on her, left no drawer or desk unsearched, no closet unexplored; examined every room, and every piece of furniture in each, and found with delight that the wealth, which was now her own, far exceeded her most sanguine expectations. She looked with a suspicion, which she had not the delicacy to conceal, on the head clerk, a man of the strictest probity, repeatedly told him he must render an exact account of his late master's affairs, and insulted the old housekeeper, the tried and faith-

ful servant in whom Mr. Manvers had placed implicit confidence, by finding fault with the household arrangements, and declaring her intention of changing the whole system.

The orphan had been summoned from the establishment in Sloane-street, where she had, during the last twelve years, resided as a parlour boarder, to come and visit the cold remains of her friend and benefactor, and had arrived at his abode soon after the melancholy intelligence of his death had reached her. Looked on by the head clerk and housekeeper as the person who was to inherit their late master's fortune, they were anxious that she should remain in the house, and received her with every demonstration of respect. They knew that her grief was heartfelt, and deeply sympathized in it. Mrs. Forsythe treated her with a fawning attention during the first two or three days, calculating that, should a will be found, and that the orphan was to be the heiress of her brother, it would be politic to conciliate her good will, in the hope that it might lead to an addition to whatever provision Mr. Manvers might have assigned for her. That it would be a small one, she entertained no doubt, and, consequently, she was desirous of profiting by any chance that offered to increase it. Her flattery was so fulsome and unacceptable to the orphan, that it required a lively recollection of the benefits received from Mr. Manvers, and a warm sense of gratitude for them, to make her tolerate his sister, whose manners and tone were so dissimilar to her own, as to render her society anything but agreeable to her. When, however, the fact of Mrs. Forsythe being the heiress to her brother's possessions was made known, that person soon changed her manner towards the *protégée* of her brother; her fulsome adulation was turned to an insolent *brusquerie* still more insupportable, and she reminded the poor girl of her dependent position, with a coarseness so absolutely revolting, that Selina left the house where she had never previously experienced aught save kindness and affection, evinced with a delicacy that enhanced the value of both.

She returned to the establishment in Sloane-street, where

she had resided as a parlour boarder, determined to solicit the assistance of the Mesdames Patterson to procure her a situation as governess. The change in her position had already been made known to them, for Mrs. Forsythe, with a malice and littleness of mind peculiar to her, had written them a letter, stating that the girl whom her brother had foolishly brought up, and educated as if she were a lady, was now left a beggar; and that *she*, being sole possessor of his wealth, must decline making so bad a use of it, as to allow any portion to be wasted in paying any arrears due to them. It happened unfortunately that a quarter's salary had fallen due two days after the death of Mr. Manvers, and as the sum was no less a one than fifty pounds, that generous man having, to ensure the comfort of his ward, agreed to pay the liberal allowance of two hundred per annum for her board and lodging, the intelligence conveyed by his sister occasioned no very agreeable surprise in the establishment in Sloane-street.

The Mesdames Patterson were elderly maiden ladies, who, after having struggled during the commencement of their career as teachers through many and heavy pecuniary difficulties, found themselves, after twenty years employed in tuition, in a state of comparative affluence, less the fruit of their industry than the consequence of the rigid system of economy in which they had persevered. They demanded large remuneration from their pupils, and fed them so frugally, that the children consigned to the tender mercies of a poor-house were not more sparingly dieted than the young ladies in their establishment. The difference was, the first were served on delf, pewter, or tin; on hucka-back; the second on delicate china or plate, on snowy damask. All breakage by the servants was charged in the quarterly accounts to the young ladies, and though the parents might murmur at the extravagance of such charges, the Mesdames Patterson would not abate one shilling of them, saying, that in their establishment they permitted nothing but the very best china and glass to be used, and the breakage must be paid for.

The sum thus mulcted, amounted to no inconsiderable one at the close of each year, and the young ladies of the Misses Patterson's establishment were compelled to console themselves for the damaged bohea tea, bought at half-price, the adulterated cocoa and chocolate, the coarse sugar, rancid butter, pale-blue milk, and stale household bread, supplied for their morning and evening repasts, by the *recherché* elegance of the damask, china, plate, and glass, on which they were served. The paucity of the dinners, and bad quality of the low-priced viands, the Misses Patterson thought were amply atoned for by the irreproachable elegance of the dinner service. And even this elegance became a source of profit instead of cost to the establishment, for each young lady was expected to bring a silver teapot, cream-ewer, and sugar-basin, half-a-dozen silver forks, and spoons, with a silver dish, which, on their leaving the school, were to become the property of the Mesdames Patterson. Thus these ladies at the expiration of a few years, found themselves the owners of an extensive assortment of plate, which went on accumulating every year, the charges for keeping which in repair were regularly entered in the accounts of the pupils.

It was a subject of general remark and commendation, that the young ladies of the Misses Patterson's establishment had clearer complexions, and slighter waists, than those of any other; and were much less frequently attacked by inflammatory complaints. With such advantages, what parent could listen to the representations of her daughter, on the paucity or quality of her food? even if young ladies were prone to make such. But that those confided to the Mesdames Patterson were not so disposed, will not surprise our readers, when we add, that few young ladies were received by them until they had entered their thirteenth year (*theirs* being what is termed a finishing school); a period of life at which *les demoiselles* begin to be extremely sensible of the advantages of a clear complexion and slight waist, and are willing to submit to a spare diet to secure them. To orphans, rich enough to pay the large remuneration required, the maiden sisters, when

their education was finished, offered a home, as parlour boarders; and among these, Selina Stratford had been placed. She now returned, believing (so ignorant was she of the world) that she should receive kindness and commiseration, under her present affliction, from the Misses Patterson. Her reception was a very different one to that on which she counted. They listened to her with unmoved countenances, although her words were often interrupted by tears, and when she had concluded, told her that a letter from Mrs. Forsythe had made them perfectly aware of her position.

"When we received you into this house," said the senior of the Misses Patterson, "we were wholly ignorant that you were a dependent on the charity of a grocer. We demurred about receiving a pupil placed by a person in that station of life, having always made it a rule to accept only young ladies of good family. Indeed, we carefully concealed from our other pupils, and their parents, that *the* Mr. Manvers who placed you here, and paid your bills, was no other than the tradesman who probably served them with all the articles in his trade. But to find ourselves taken in, defrauded, as it were, out of our just claims — you are aware, Miss Stratford, that one quarter's salary became due a week ago, and that another quarter has commenced, and also that the rules of our house are, that a quater's notice of leaving should be given, or the salary paid in advance — is really too bad. It was shameful of Mr. Manvers not to have made arrangements that *we* should be paid, when we had departed so far from our established rules as to receive a young person who had no other recommendation to our notice than his. Yes, it was most dishonourable, I must say."

Selina Stratford, confounded and indignant at hearing such reproaches uttered against her benefactor, whose name had never previously been pronounced by the Mesdames Patterson unaccompanied by praises of his generosity, liberality, and punctuality, stood amazed and silent. Frequent had been the presents, graciously offered, and thankfully accepted, from Mr. Manvers to the Misses Patterson, of cases

of superior tea, Greek honey, dried fruits, and sweetmeats, with other dainties peculiar to his craft, given to induce these starch and somewhat haughty dames to show favour and kindness to his *protégée*. Nor were these *cadeaux* unavailing; for these ladies had often declared, that from none of the friends or parents of their pupils had they received such constant and useful gifts, as from the guardian of Miss Stratford; and their smiles and indulgence to her having been meted out in proportion, she had, with the confidence of youth and inexperience, fully calculated that now, in her hour of need, they would not desert her. She counted on being received by them until they could hear of a situation for her as governess, in which their recommendation could place her. Their harsh words and altered mien convinced her that she had been greatly in error when she built her hopes on so unstable a foundation as their good-will; and as this conviction forced itself on her mind tears filled her eyes — less the result of selfish regret at the probable consequences to herself, than at discovering the unworthiness of those of whom she had hitherto entertained a favourable opinion. The first lessons in the school of adversity are ever acquired with pain, and this pain is always in proportion to the native goodness of the scholar. Selina Stratford felt how differently *she* would have acted in similar circumstances, and this consciousness of a better nature rendered her regret more acute, her indignation more lively.

"Brought up in the principles of probity that govern this house, you cannot, surely, help feeling, Miss Stratford, that *we* ought not to be losers by our misplaced confidence in Mr. Manvers," resumed the elder Miss Patterson. "He was liberal in his allowance of pocket money to you; indeed more so than was right, considering your dependent position, and his shameful neglect in not providing for you. He made you presents, too, of considerable value, and you cannot, surely, have idly expended the money you received?"

"I have still some by me, Madam," replied Selina.

"Then you will have but little profited by the instruction received beneath this roof, if you can hesitate a moment in

appropriating every shilling you possess towards paying, as far as it will go, for the quarter due to us by your late friend. Your watch, trinkets, best clothes, India shawl, and books, will help to defray our account, and, although we shall still be heavy losers, we cannot blame you, provided you give up, as you are in common honesty bound to do, all that you possess."

"Yes, this will be only fair; and my sister and I show our kindness and forbearance to you, in pointing out how you may clear yourself from debt," observed the junior Miss Patterson, assuming a bland air.

"I accede, at once, to your proposal, Madam," replied Selina, "and hope that, in return for my willingness to give up all I possess, you will kindly use your influence to procure me a situation as governess — my sole chance of subsistence, henceforth."

"Certainly, if we should hear of any person wanting a governess, we will think of you, but I fear it will not be very likely.

"People begin to find out that private education, carried on beneath the parental roof, is attended with so many disadvantages, that they prefer sending their children to establishments like ours. A teacher at a school will be the object to which your wishes must point, as being the one most attainable; but bear in mind, the salaries given are so small, that it will require the utmost prudence and economy on your part, to enable you to clothe yourself with the respectability expected in such establishments."

"Might I be permitted to remain here until some such situation offers?" inquired Selina, her cheeks suffused with red, at being compelled to make this first appeal to the charity of her fellow-creatures.

The sisters looked at each other, and then, after a moment's pause, the elder replied, that provided Miss Stratford would fulfil the duties of a teacher, in return for her board and lodging, they would not object to her remaining until something offered for her.

that even a doubt of her purity would render him inconsolable, he, nevertheless, would have heedlessly compromised her reputation, rather than miss an opportunity of being in her company, and would have exposed that of her worthy husband, by letting it be supposed that he tacitly acquiesced in his own dishonour. Now, however, foiled in his schemes, and his intended victim having escaped from his power, he regretted his own rash conduct, and experienced more pain at having aggravated the trials and sufferings of his poor secretary, than any of his *roué* friends would have believed him capable of feeling. A sentiment of shame, as deep as it was unusual with him to know, mingled with his self reproach; and, had he had hundreds at his command at that moment, there is no doubt his first use of them would have been to have released my father from every debt of his for which he was liable, and to have paid him every shilling of the arrears of salary for which he was indebted to him. Nay, more, he would, had the opportunity offered at that crisis, have bestowed on him any appointment he could have procured, as some reparation for the injury he had attempted to inflict on him. "Poor fellow!" thought Lord Willamere, "I really do believe he liked me, and liked me for myself alone. He was, indeed, disinterested, and devoted to my interest. Heigh ho! Why did he marry a woman so exquisitely handsome, that nothing short of a saint, — and Heaven knows I never set up to be one, — could have resisted her charms, or have failed to endeavour to rival him in her affection? And then to bring her to my house too! It was nothing short of madness. As well might one place untold heaps of gold within reach of a thief, and trust that he will not appropriate it, as throw beauty like Mrs. Stratford's in sight of a fellow like me, and think I could behold it without wishing to possess it. Really, such husbands bring on, by their own folly, the evils which common prudence or knowledge of the world might avert, and have only themselves to blame for the result."

By such sophistry as this did Lord Willamere endeavour

to silence the whispers of conscience, and after a brief time his self-reproach subsided into less painful feelings. He said to himself, that it was no use fretting about what could not be helped. He had not the money to free poor Stratford. When he got any, he would certainly do so (and he meant it at the time); but until then he would banish the whole affair from his mind: and he *did* banish it, by plunging into every species of amusement that offered, and by occupying his thoughts with more agreeable subjects. Yet this man, who after the lapse of a few days bestowed not a thought on the painful position to which my mother must be reduced, without money, and totally friendless, as he believed her and her husband to be, imagined that he had loved her! And so it is, that many heartless voluptuaries, like him, deceive themselves, and profane the sentiment of love, by mistaking the gross and sensual passion, which alone they are capable of feeling, for the pure and ennobling one which ever seeks the happiness of the object beloved, in preference to selfish enjoyment. Lord Willamere would, after a few days had gone by, have forgotten the existence of the man whom he believed to be pining in a prison for *his* debts, had he not been reminded of it by piles of unopened and unanswered letters, the accumulation occasioned by Stratford's absence. He glanced with alarm on the heaps, which he had not sufficient moral courage to open, and dismissed his *maître d' hôtel*, Mr. Bermingham, angrily from his presence, for having reminded him that sundry creditors were impatient and clamorous for a settlement of their accounts, and that he had paid away his last shilling in discharging the various small items of daily expenditure; the latter assertion being wholly unfounded. The fact was, no sooner had the sapient Mr. Bermingham ascertained that Stratford was not likely to return to Willamere House, than he began to think of taking advantage of his absence. The circumstance of Mr. Stratford's so abruptly quitting it, as well as Sally's letting drop some hints of the dear lady being too good to stay in a house where some people didn't know how to treat an angel when

under their roof, had led to this conclusion on his part, and he determined on making an effort to increase the extent of his power, by busying himself in matters which had, hitherto, been exclusively confided to the jurisdiction of the secretary. He went to some of the least respectable of the tradespeople, made them understand that, henceforth, *he* would have the examination and arrangement of their accounts, and that, if made worth *his* while, he would not be so mean and scrupulous as Mr. Stratford, in regard to the quality or quantity of the articles furnished, and would be much more pressing with his lord for the payment of the bills. Urged on by the hope of a liberal per centage from these said tradesmen, Mr. Bermingham took the liberty of presenting himself, with a file of their bills, in the office of his lord and master; but his reception there was such as to convince him that he had miscalculated his powers of utility in a financial point of view: a discovery, however, which he carefully concealed from those most interested in the matter, and whom he deceived by promises he was aware that he had but little chance of performing.

To go on any longer without a private secretary, Lord Willamere felt to be impossible. He must, therefore, look out for one without loss of time; but, *en attendant*, how was he to get on, without money, until the next quarter's salary became due?

While he was reflecting on this point, a card, with a letter from a Mr. Humphry, was brought him. With Mr. Humphry his lordship had formerly had negotiations of rather a delicate nature, the result of which had been to transfer a certain number of hundreds of pounds into his lordship's purse, and an appointment of a certain yearly value to the brother of the said Mr. Humphry. The card reminded Lord Willamere of this fact, one which was never remembered without unpleasant twinges of conscience; for, to have given an appointment without any scrutiny into the character or capability of filling it of the person on whom it was conferred, was rendered still more blameable from the circumstance that pecuniary

motives had induced this dereliction from honour and duty. His lordship's poverty, rather than his will, had led to this culpable traffic; and this same cause operated as strongly at the present moment as on the former occasion.

"Yes; I will see Mr. Humphry," said he to his servant, "show him into my study."

Mr. Humphry, through the medium of some clerks in the government offices, with whom he kept up an acquaintance, managed to be generally *au fait* of appointments falling vacant, or about to be created. He now came to inform Lord Willamere that a certain one had fallen into his lordship's gift the previous night, through the death of the late holder, and he solicited it for a friend of his, a gentleman, as he said, of considerable abilities and high character; who, he added, was willing to pay a reasonable *douceur* for the appointment. Lord Willamere coloured, felt embarrassed for a moment, and had Mr. Humphry been skilled in reading the thoughts by the expression of the face, he would have discovered that his lordship had not yet entirely conquered the pride and delicacy peculiar to high-born men, before want of money, that leveller, and destroyer of such sentiments, has blunted them. But Mr. Humphry, a total stranger to such feelings, was unsuspicious of their existence in the breasts of others, and attributed the heightened colour of Lord Willamere to satisfaction at the prospect of an advantageous treaty with him, rather than to a latent sense of shame and humiliation at entering into such reprehensible negotiations. The very place now become vacant was the one designed for poor Stratford, as the one formerly granted through Mr. Humphry's arrangement had also been. This recollection flashed through the mind of Lord Willamere, and a sigh of real but transient regret followed it. "This man," thought he, "is the evil genius of Stratford. This is the second time that he has stepped between him and fortune;" and something of dislike towards Mr. Humphry was mingled with regret for Stratford. How anxious are men to turn the blame *they* merit, to some one else! It never occurred to Lord Willamere, that

his own reckless extravagance, entailing pecuniary embarrassments which rendered money indispensable for their relief, had prostrated the honourable principles which ought to have precluded his having recourse to negotiations like those entered into with Mr. Humphry, and that these, and *not* that person, had defeated the interests of poor Stratford.

There are always Mr. Humphrys to be found, ready to avail themselves of the laxity of principle and pecuniary wants of men in power; but his lordship, anxious to throw the blame off his own shoulders to those of another, looked on Mr. Humphry as the evil genius, as he termed it, of his late secretary. He was silent for some moments, and his companion, imagining that his taciturnity originated in some mental calculation on the value of the appointment solicited, resumed the topic.

"Your lordship will not, I hope, be very unreasonable in your demands."

Lord Willamere's cheeks again glowed, and he would have liked to have kicked his visitor out of the room, but he nevertheless vanquished his indignation, and observed that "the appointment was rather a lucrative one, and, consequently, a consideration in proportion to its value was naturally to be expected;" adding, that "as it was promised to another," (an assertion the truth of which Mr. Humphry wholly disbelieved, and took to be only made as a plea for a larger *douceur* for the appointment,) "he could not break his promise, unless the temptation to do so was very strong indeed."

This paltering with his own honour, or rather with the slight portion of it that still remained in his heart, cost Lord Willamere no inconsiderable effort; but he was urged on to it by the recollection of certain pressing debts of honour, the non-payment of which would compromise him in society; and also — yes, positively, Reader — also by the remembrance, that only through a supply to be obtained by the present mode, could he release poor Stratford from prison. This last

reflection silenced his wavering scruples. He fancied that the *end* justified the *means;* nay, more, grown bold by something resembling a gleam of self-satisfaction, he determined to insist on a larger remuneration for the appointment than he might otherwise have been disposed to require.

"Well, my lord, what sum will your lordship really be satisfied with?" demanded Mr. Humphry, a little crest-fallen at the gravity of Lord Willamere, which he shrewdly guessed augured that the appointment would not be obtained on what he called reasonable terms.

"I will not accept a sous less than two thousand guineas," replied his lordship.

"Two thousand guineas is a very large sum, my lord, for my friend to sink. I had hoped that half that sum, or, at most, fifteen hundred pounds would have been considered sufficient.

The *fierté* of the nobleman was not all gone, although the honour and probity of the man had departed. Lord Willamere drew himself up to his full height; and when he did so, there was a dignity in his demeanour that seldom failed to produce an effect on those with whom he wished it to be successful. Mr. Humphry saw at a glance that no less than the sum named would be accepted. Nevertheless, he made one more attempt to economise some additional sum, however small, for himself.

"I am then to understand, my lord, that two thousand *pounds* is your ultimatum?"

"I said guineas, Sir," was the reply, uttered with as stately an air as if the speaker had never degraded himself, or was not even at the moment engaged in a transaction contrary to his duty.

"Well, my lord, the money shall be forthcoming the day that my friend is gazetted to the appointment."

Lord Willamere bit his nether lip; and, after a pause, said, "that half the sum would be very acceptable to him at that time."

"There 's many things between the cup and the lip, my lord," observed Mr. Humphry.

"You don't mean to insinuate, that having pledged myself to bestow the appointment on your friend, I would break my promise?" demanded the peer angrily.

"I beg pardon, my lord; but, as your lordship confessed to me a short time ago that you had promised this very appointment to another, I thought" — and here Mr. Humphry abruptly stopped, for the glance of offended dignity and fierceness of the earl, rendered him fearful of finishing the sentence he had been about to utter, which meant nothing more nor less, than to state in as civil terms as such an insulting suspicion could be worded, that he feared his lordship might, after receiving the money, bestow the appointment on another.

The pride which is not sufficiently strong to prevent a man from committing an unworthy action, often survives the heavy blows inflicted on it by his turpitude, and by the pangs it occasions, avenges his misdeeds. Lord Willamere positively writhed under the agony of the insult implied by Mr. Humphry's interrupted speech; yet such was the thraldom in which his pecuniary difficulties had plunged him, that he feared to break off the agreement which he had but just completed, by giving utterance to the anger he felt. He again bit his lip; and although the sudden pallor which replaced the flush of rage that but a moment before had crimsoned his brow, betrayed the internal struggle, he smoothed his countenance, and observed — "O! I understand, Mr. Humphry; you meant to say that the uncertainty of life might prevent my fulfilling the pledge."

"Yes, my lord, precisely; that is exactly what I meant to say," replied Mr. Humphry, inwardly smiling at the favourable interpretation of his doubts given by his lordship.

"There is one way in which this can be arranged. If you will let me have five hundred guineas to-day, and your note of hand, payable on the day when your friend is gazetted, for the remaining sum of fifteen hundred guineas, I will give you

my note for five hundred guineas, which note you will return me the day the appointment is gazetted."

Mr. Humphry was afraid of refusing these conditions, lest he should too far offend the peer; nor dared he avow that his lordship's bill for five hundred guineas was not worth as many sixpences in his opinion, although such was the fact. He, therefore, determined to risk the money; and, drawing from his pocket-book a blank cheque, filled it up for the amount, and handed it to his lordship, who bowed him out with his accustomed dignity.

"I have not made a bad thing of it after all," thought Mr. Humphry, as he left Willamere House, "although I had hoped to have made a better. His lordship is not so hard up as I thought, or we would have accepted fifteen hundred instead of two thousand. I shall put one thousand in my pocket by this transaction after all, for I persuaded Gilchrist that there was no chance of getting the appointment for less than three thousand. I wish now I had said *four;* and so I would have done, had I anticipated that his lordship would have stood out so firmly for the two thousand. But it can't be helped now. I must only try to make it up next time. Bless my stars, how proud these lords can be, when anything excites their mettle! Why, hang me, if he didn't draw himself up two inches at least above his natural stature, when I was going to ask what security I was to have if I paid the money down, that he mightn't give the place to some one else! He's a queer'un, that 's what he is. Not above doing a wrong action, but greatly above being told he has done it."

CHAPTER X.

"And now for realising poor Stratford," said Lord Willamere, as his vulgar visitor departed. "I should like to go to him myself, but I have not courage to meet him, after that unlucky scene with his wife. With *his* notions, he could, I am sure, ill brook my presence; so I must send Spellerman to liberate him. I must first, however, get this cheque cashed."

And putting the said cheque in his waistcoat-pocket, Lord Willamere rang the bell, and ordered his brougham to be at the door as soon as possible.

"Your lordship's groom has just been here to say that the bay horse is lame to-day."

"The devil it is! Well then, tell him to have the brown horse harnessed."

"The brown, my lord, was sent, last evening, to the job-man's, to be exchanged for another, for it was off its feed for the last two days, and the job-man, your lordship, sent word that he had not a horse to take his place."

"What the devil does the fellow mean? Does he suppose that I am to pay him extravagant prices for job-horses, and he is not to keep others in readiness to supply their places in case of accidents?"

"The groom said, my lord, that the job-man seemed very careless, and, in short, my lord, was anything but civil," observed Mr. Bermingham; who, for reasons of his own, was very desirous that his lord and master's custom should be transferred to another job-man, a particular friend of his, who promised not only to supply him with a quiet and sure-footed nag whenever he wished to ride, but to allow him a certain per centage on the account, if he procured him Lord Willamere's custom.

"What a bore!" exclaimed his lordship. "Have my saddle-horses round as soon as possible, and I will call and reprimand Mr. Wilkinson."

"I hope his lordship won't let out what I said about the job-man being careless and uncivil, for, if he does, the truth may come out. I only said it just to get his lordship to take away his custom from him, for it's no use letting a fellow go on serving with horses who won't give a per centage, when I know a man who will."

Lord Willamere was half inclined to send Bermingham to the bank, with the cheque, but a dislike to that person's seeing whose signature was to it, prevented his employing him on this occasion. He therefore rode to the bank, took the

amount of the cheque in bank notes, and turned his horse's head towards the office of Mr. Spellerman, determined to give that gentleman wherewithal to release poor Stratford from prison, and a further sum towards the payment of the arrears of his salary. Lord Willamere felt such a real satisfaction in the prospect of discharging this duty, that it almost reconciled him to the means by which such an end was to be attained. His mind was relieved from a weight that had oppressed it ever since the arrest of Stratford for his debt, and could he have banished the recollection of his unsuccessful suit to the wife of that individual, he would have been comparatively happy. That, however, still rankled in his breast, and inflicted as deep a mortification on his vanity as on his heart. Unluckily for Lord Willamere's good intentions, the yard of the job-man with whom he dealt lay on the route to Mr. Spellerman's office; and more unluckily still, just as his lordship was passing the door, the job-man himself was entering it. Lord Willamere immediately dismounted, for the purpose of expostulating on the alleged complaints made against that person, and for insisting on having fresh horses sent in place of those incapable of doing their work. Nothing could exceed the civility of Mr. Wilkinson, except it was his regret that he had not, at the moment, any horses worthy to replace those jobbed to his lordship. He would do anything in the world to please or oblige his lordship, but what could he do? Horses never were so dear, or money so scarce, as at the present time. Although thousands of pounds were due to him, he could not call in even a few hundreds. The nobility and gentry didn't like being asked for money, and he hoped none of 'em could say that *he* ever dunned 'em. No; he knew his place better.

This last hint appealed powerfully to Lord Willamere's feelings, by reminding him, that for the last three years, he had only paid a very small portion of his large account to Mr. Wilkinson.

To be sure, resumed that person, three of the finest horses he had seen for many years were that morning offered

to him for sale, and at a very reasonable price too. Five hundred pounds were demanded; but ready money only would be accepted. He really had not that sum at command. If he had, he would not have hesitated a moment, for the horses were well worth seven hundred and fifty pounds. But what could he do? His lordship might look at them, if he pleased, for the owner had left them in the stable for a few hours, on the chance of their being seen by one of his customers.

"There can be no harm in just looking at them," thought Lord Willamere, as he followed Mr. Wilkinson to the stable.

"Lead out the horses, Tom," said Mr. Wilkinson.

"Yes, Sir," replied Tom, pulling down a fore lock of his hair, as a mark of respect.

"Just trot 'em out a bit."

The horses were trotted out; Mr. Wilkinson pointing out their perfections with all the *gusto* of a connoisseur, and the *savoir faire valoir* of an experienced dealer.

"Never saw finer steppers in my life, my lord. What capital action! There is not their match to be found in all England. I only wish I wasn't so poor at this moment, and I'd buy them at once, and job them to your lordship. I'd be sorry to see 'em with any one else, that 's the truth of it, for I take a pleasure in furnishing your lordship's equipages with my best horses. Only I make it a point never to dun any nobleman, I 'd just request your lordship to let me have enough money on account to secure these fine horses, for it will really hurt me to see them go to some one else."

Lord Willamere could no longer resist the temptation held out to him. Poor Stratford, in his prison, faded away before the pleasure of becoming the possessor of the finest horses, and greatest bargain in all England; or, if he *was* remembered, it was with a shake of the head, and a "*Que voulez vous.*" He can be released the moment I get the 1500 guineas from Humphry, which must be in a few days,

and a week sooner or later can make no great difference to him, after all.

"Well, Mr. Wilkinson, as you are in such want of money, I will enable you to buy these horses." And Lord Willamere drew forth the 500*l*., and transferred them to the dealer's hand; and *he*, quite as much surprised as delighted at so unexpected a payment, pocketed the money, bowed his lordship to the door, promising that the horses should be forthwith sent to the stables of Willamere House, and when the peer had departed, rubbed his hands and smiled at the reflection that he had done a profitable day's work; he having, some days previously, bought the said horses at a country fair, for two hundred.

"He 'd have seen me far enough," thought Mr. Wilkinson, "before he 'd have paid me five hundred pounds in one slap, if he had not been kept with jaded nags the last few months, and had not set his heart on having these. How easy it is to *do* even the sharpest of these lords and gentlemen, when one knows how to go about it! I 'd bet five pounds that if his dearest friend had offered his lordship these same nags for one half the money, he wouldn't have given it. No, we are the persons to do 'em."

When my father and mother were summoned to the hospitable board of Mr. Manvers, they found his two daughters, interesting-looking girls, of the ages of nine and ten, with him. "Martha and Mary, this lady," bowing to my mother, "will, I hope, be so good as to remain some time in this house, and I trust, my dear girls, that your conduct will be such as to merit her approbation and conciliate her esteem. You, Madam, will, I hope, overlook any little shyness and awkwardness on their parts," continued Mr. Manvers, "and take into consideration their not having had a mother's care." And here the lips of the speaker became tremulous with emotion. My mother shook hands with the little girls, who met her advances to acquaintanceship with gentleness and cordiality; and then the little party, marshalled by the kind host, took their seats at table.

"But," added Miss Patterson, "you must be aware that your position here necessarily becomes wholly altered. You must leave the chamber you have hitherto occupied, and share the room and bed of Miss Waterhouse. You must be unremitting in your exertions to perform your duty, and merit our approval, in return for the heavy expense we entail on ourselves in allowing you to remain here."

"Yes," said the junior Miss Patterson, "your board and lodging will be a serious expense; but our humanity and good-nature induce us to sacrifice our own interest for the sake of advancing yours, and I trust you will know how to estimate the favour. You can devote your leisure hours in the evening to mending the house linen, and doing any little plain work my sister or I may have occasion for. By the bye, I have just now some under-petticoats to be made, which I will have sent to you. Miss Waterhouse is a steady industrious girl, who never spares her labour, is ready to turn a hand to any thing, and never gives trouble to the servants. You will do well to follow her example in all things, and, above all, in the humility for which she is so conspicuous."

Selina listened in silence to the sisters, confounded by a sense of her own dependent position. She knew not what to do, — had no friend to turn to for counsel or protection, — and although she was aware that to accept the offer made by the Mesdames Patterson would be to expose herself to the labour, without the wages of a servant, she thought that even this would be better, than to go forth alone and unprotected to seek a home and employment to support her in it. She thanked the sisters, and said that for the present she would avail herself of their offer.

CHAPTER XIV.

"It is advisable that no time should be lost in transferring the money and articles which we are to have in part payment of the sum due to us," observed Miss Patterson, after a short pause and a whispering consultation with her sister. "Mind,

I say in part payment; for of course all you possess would go but a very short way indeed towards discharging your debt; and I fully expect that when you get a situation, with a salary attached to it, you will appropriate three parts of it to discharging in full the amount due to us."

"That will be only fair," said the junior sister, "and Miss Stratford cannot object to it."

Miss Patterson accompanied Selina to her chamber, and stood peering into each drawer as it was opened. "Let me have the money first!" exclaimed she, reaching eagerly at the note-case and purse which were in a corner of the desk and clutching them in her grasp. "Are you sure that you have no more elsewhere?—None in your pocket?"

"Only a few shillings, Madam," replied Selina.

"Let me see."

The orphan drew a purse from her pocket, and its contents, amounting to some fifteen or sixteen shillings, were counted over by Miss Patterson, who, having ascertained the precise sum, was about to replace it in the purse again, and to transfer it to her own pocket, when Selina ventured to say, "Pardon me, but I should not like to part with that purse. It was the gift of my kind friend, Mr. Manvers."

"Oh! you may keep it, if you set such a store by it," and Miss Patterson threw, rather than handed back the empty purse; "but your kind friend, as you are pleased to call him, would have done better in leaving you something to keep you in bread hereafter, than in foolishly supplying you with more pocket-money than you wanted; which has induced a habit of extravagance greatly to be deplored in a person in your dependent situation,"

"You will oblige me, Madam, by sparing all reflections on the memory of my best friend," said Selina, and tears filled her eyes.

"You must conquer this irritability, if you intend to thrive in this or any other establishment you may enter," observed Miss Patterson. "It will be a great obstacle to you through life, I can assure you. Let me see how much gold

there is in that other purse, and what notes there are in the pocket-book."

She waited not for Selina to count the money, but did so herself; and then, having ascertained that the note-case was empty, she possessed herself of the gold, some seventeen or eighteen sovereigns, and then turned her attention to the wardrobe.

"You will not require these coloured silk dresses," observed she. "Black, or very dark brown, are the colours most suitable to a governess. I thought your shawl was better, but I find it is only a low-priced one. You lately bought some new linen and stockings, I have heard; that was a piece of extravagance, but they will suit me," and she counted over the said articles. "Are these all your trinkets? Surely I have seen you wear some others!"

"I assure you, Madam, these are all I possess."

"Well, but you need not cry about it, child. Really you must conquer this habit of shedding tears on every occasion. It will never do. Have you not another gold chain, a smaller one?"

"Yes, Madam, one I always wear; which has a locket attached, with the hair of my parents."

"A black ribbon will answer quite as well, and be more suitable to your altered circumstances; so give me the chain."

With unsteady fingers Selina drew the chain from her neck; and, having unfastened it from the locket, consigned it to the hands of Miss Patterson, who then shamelessly reminded her that she had not taken off a ring.

"No! that ring I cannot, will not, part from!" exclaimed Selina, tortured beyond the power of further endurance: "That was the wedding ring of my mother!"

Her watch, with its chain and seals, was next demanded, and the whole of her property, except two or three of her worst gowns, and a few other indispensable articles, being delivered up to the mean and avaricious woman who so unblushingly seized them, the orphan was left to remove her

now scanty wardrobe to the miserable attic she was henceforth to share with the much-enduring Miss Waterhouse.

Nothing could be more cheerless than this wretched chamber. So low that Selina could not stand upright, save in its centre, it was lighted by a small window, precisely in front of which, a stack of chimnies protruded so closely, as nearly to intercept the light, giving the room the air of a prison. Three iron bars, to preclude the possibility of ingress or egress, strengthened the resemblance, which the paucity and quality of the furniture was not calculated to destroy. A deal table, very unsteady on its legs, stood before the window, and a cracked looking-glass of small dimensions graced it. A wretched looking bed, with a very soiled counterpane and curtains, two ricketty chairs, a broken basin and jug, and an empty pomatum-pot, completed the contents of this wretched chamber; and a few of the robes of Miss Waterhouse, suspended on wooden pegs from the wall, added to the dreariness of its aspect.

Never previously had Selina ascended to this portion of the mansion of the Misses Patterson, or imagined that aught so cheerless and poverty-stricken could be found beneath a roof inhabited by persons in easy, if not in affluent circumstances. She shuddered as she contemplated the room, and contrasted it with the clean and cheerful one she had hitherto occupied, and inwardly prayed that she might not long be doomed to be an inmate of this dark and dingy attic. She recoiled with a sentiment of distaste, she could neither vanquish nor wholly conceal, as she looked at the dirty curtains beneath which she was to share the bed of Miss Waterhouse, and felt that she would infinitely prefer sleeping alone on the boards, to such companionship.

Miss Patterson, observing her emotion, and justly interpreting its cause, said, "You need not be alarmed about the bed. It is a very good one, I assure you. Excellent feathers, and a good straw paillasse under. I never heard the least complaint of it, and Miss Waterhouse has now occupied it for three years, so it is well aired."

Selina made no reply, and Miss Patterson withdrew, leaving her to reflect on her altered position, and all the disagreeable consequences it entailed.

A servant, in a few minutes after, announced to her that an elderly gentleman wished to see her; and handing her a card, she read with satisfaction the name of Mr. Vernon, the senior clerk of her late friend Mr. Manvers. She hastened down stairs to receive him, and forgetful for the moment of her altered position in the establishment of the Mesdames Patterson, was on the point of entering the sitting-room formerly assigned to her use, and where she had been in the habit of receiving Mr. Manvers, when the servant laid hold of her dress, and said, "Miss, Miss, you must not go in there any more. Missus told me not to let you, now as you are hired as a teacher to help Miss Waterhouse."

The blood rushed to the brows of the orphan at this address; but a moment's reflection taught her that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the poverty that exposed her to such annoyances, and with a calm demeanour she inquired of the servant where she could receive Mr. Vernon?

"Here in the hall, Miss, if you please, where Miss Waterhouse sees her friends when they call. The old gentleman is a-waiting outside the door, as I didn't like to let him stop in the hall till I knew whether he really was a friend of yours, there are so many rogues going about with false excuses, and there 's always a stray umbrella or so lying about, which they walk off with, if they can lay their hands on nothing else. You see, Miss, there's two or three nice clean chairs here; so the old gentleman and you can sit down and have a bit of chat; but hush, Miss," and here the woman bent close to the ear of Selina, "mind you don't speak loud; for the old 'uns are very 'quisitive, and will be trying to listen to what you say. But mum 's the word; I 'd lose my place, if they suspected I put you on your guard."

"Let in the gentleman, if you please," said Selina, and in the next moment Mr. Vernon stood before her.

After a cordial greeting, he turned and said, "I wish to speak to you, Miss Stratford."

"I am sorry I have no room to receive you in, replied Selina, "so our conversation must take place here."

"What, so soon!" muttered Mr. Vernon. "I did not think that you would already, my dear young lady, have experienced the effect of altered circumstances. I expected better things from the Mesdames Patterson. I came for the purpose of inviting you to take up your abode at my humble home for the present. My wife will be proud and happy to receive you; and be assured that whatever our poor house may want in elegance, you shall find no deficiency in the cordiality and sincerity of our welcome. Since I have seen the effect produced here by our recent affliction, I am doubly anxious that you should seek a home with my wife; so let me implore you to accept at once our invitation, and let me conduct you to my house."

The warmth and kindness with which the invitation was urged, and a recollection of the squalid chamber and bed, to be shared with Miss Waterhouse, decided Selina to accept it. She requested an interview with the Mesdames Patterson, communicated to them her intention of immediately leaving their establishment, and solicited their recommendation to procure her a situation as governess in a private family.

"Really you must excuse our doing any such thing," replied the senior of the sisters. "Leaving our house in such a sudden, I may say, such a *mysterious* manner, at a moment's notice, has a very strange appearance, to say the least of it. I cannot help thinking that you make a very ungrateful return, — yes, a very ungrateful return, indeed, for our great kindness in offering to maintain you, after the heavy loss we have sustained by you; and as you choose to leave our house, and throw yourself on the protection of Heaven knows who —"

"Pardon me, Madam, for interrupting you, I am going to the house of one of my oldest friends, of one who has known me from my infancy, Mr. Vernon, the senior clerk of my late friend Mr. Manvers."

"Then you may look to him for a recommendation; for I repeat, *we* shall certainly not permit any reference to be made to us, and we desire to hear or see nothing more of a person who has proved so ungrateful."

Selina hastened to the wretched chamber where her now scanty wardrobe had been deposited; and having had it removed down stairs, she entered the hackney coach which Mr. Vernon had called to the door, and accompanied by him, was driven off to his house.

The good man looked surprised, when, in answer to his question of whether the small box in the coach contained all her property, she told him of the seizure made of all her valuables and clothes by the Mesdames Patterson.

"How I rejoice that I have taken you away from such heartless and selfish women!" said he. "My wife blamed me for not having at once requested you to make a home with us; but the truth is, I expected to the last that Mrs. Forsythe would offer you an asylum with her, or at least make some provision for you; and seeing the dislike and unjust suspicions she entertained towards me, I feared that were we to take you at once to our humble abode, it might prejudice her against you, and prevent her serving you. As, however, she has declared that she will do nothing for you, there is no longer any good to be accomplished by my wife and I holding back from proving to you the affection and respect we entertain. We feel that we cannot better show our gratitude to our departed friend and benefactor than by endeavouring to befriend one he so truly loved. But here we are at home. There 's my wife peeping over the blind, impatient for our arrival. Welcome, my dear young lady, welcome."

The cordial reception given by Mrs. Vernon, who vied with her husband in kindness towards the orphan, was a balm to the wound inflicted on her heart by the worldly-minded Mesdames Patterson. She was soon installed in possession of a small, but neat and cheerful room, which, with its white dimity bed and window curtains, and its simple but useful furniture, appeared charming in her eyes after the dreary

attic, which she was to have shared with Miss Waterhouse, had she remained in the establishment at Sloane-street. A homely but comfortable dinner was soon after served by a tidy, decent-looking, young woman, and, although neither plate, expensive china, damask, nor cut-glass decked the board, the plenty and excellence of the viands more than compensated for their absence, and the cordiality of the host and hostess formed so striking a contrast to the cold formality of the Misses Patterson, or the rude manners of Mrs. Forsythe, that Selina was soothed and cheered by it. "Here, my dear young Lady," said Mr. Vernon after dinner, "is the key of my book-case, which contains, if not a large, at least a good selection of books, the solace of my leisure hours, which will prevent time hanging heavily on your hands, when my wife is occupied with her household concerns."

"I hope Mrs. Vernon will treat me without ceremony, and allow me to make myself useful," replied Selina. "I can work tolerably well at my needle, and will be glad to assist in any plain work that may be required."

"Your society, dear young Lady, will amply repay us, without your troubling yourself with needle-work. The presence of a youthful guest, and, above all, such a one as you, will be as a cordial to our old hearts. It will warm them, and bring back the reminiscences of our youth. Often have we wished that the Almighty had blessed us with a daughter, and pictured to ourselves how she would have cheered our hearth; for age requires the solace of youth to break in on its sombre thoughts, as nature does the sun-beams that disperse the clouds of winter."

"Yes," observed the worthy Mrs. Vernon, "I feel Miss Stratford's presence will be a comfort to us."

After a few days passed in quiet comfort with this excellent pair, Selina thought that it behoved her to make some exertion to earn a livelihood for herself, and not sit down in idleness, a dependant on Mr. and Mrs. Vernon. She expressed her sentiments on this point to them, and though they endeavoured to make her feel that her presence beneath

their roof, far from being a source of expense beyond their means, was a positive pleasure to them, they could not conquer her repugnance to continue a tax on their hospitality and kindness. They declared that, could they at their decease bequeath to her the modest competency they now enjoyed, they never would have permitted her to seek a home elsewhere; but, knowing that this was impossible, they having some years before invested their *all* in an annuity for their joint lives, they would not listen to the promptings of their own desire to retain her, when opportunities might offer for her earning an independence, or making friends more able, though not more willing to serve her than themselves.

"There is still plenty of time, dear child," said Mr. Vernon, "to think of procuring you a situation. Why should you be in such a hurry to leave us?"

"How we shall miss you," added his wife; "whenever I looked on your bright face, I felt as if I beheld a nosegay of flowers fresh from the garden. It reminded me of other times, when I too was young, just as flowers always do; and if we consulted our own happiness, never would we consent to your leaving us. But we must not be selfish. We must think of you, and not of ourselves, unable as we are, by the way in which we have locked up our little fortune, before we thought you would ever stand in need of it, to secure you a competency when we shall be no more."

Such were the persons whom it was the good fortune of the orphan to be brought in contact with, when she believed herself without a friend to whom she could turn for refuge; and deeply was their kindness engraved on her heart. Yes, there are many still on earth as good and kind, to prove that though the world corrupts some, it does not sully fine natures.

CHAPTER XV.

"How unfortunate it is, my dear," observed Mrs. Vernon, "that we have no acquaintances in a sphere of life that would be useful in obtaining Miss Stratford a suitable position.

With her talents and accomplishments, she might aspire to enter into one of the noblest families as a governess; but such appointments cannot be obtained without recommendations from persons of a certain station in life, and I fear a reference to such plain and humble individuals as ourselves would not satisfy a great lady."

"More 's the pity," observed Mr. Vernon, "but it can't be helped; we must do what we can, my dear. I believe the general plan is to insert an advertisement in one of the newspapers. We will try this scheme, and take our chance for its success. How unfortunate that those worldly-minded and selfish women, the Misses Patterson, should have behaved so ill at the last, for a reference to them, the young lady never having been out before as a governess, would have removed all difficulty."

"Yes, it is peculiarly unfortunate," added Mrs. Vernon, thoughtfully.

The advertisement was inserted in a newspaper, and after two or three days a letter was addressed to Selina, desiring her to call in Grosvenor Square, on the Countess of Almondbury.

"I wish we knew something of this lady," said Mrs. Vernon, as she read over for the third time the note from Grosvenor Square. "The address comes from a good quarter; does it not, my dear?"

"O yes; Grosvenor Square is, to my thinking, for the nobility what Lombard Street is for bankers — a sort of voucher for their respectability. There are no furnished houses to be let by the season there, as in other fashionable parts of London. One does not see there a house occupied one spring by a duke, and the next by some returned nabob or successful speculator. No; Grosvenor Square is chiefly inhabited by the descendants of those who built the mansions it contains, and a portion of the thrift and prudence that marked their ancestors seems still to prevail in the establishments there. New quarters of London are soon filled by another kind of inhabitants, if not another class, — the elder sons of

peers, on their marriage, with limited means, and unlimited habits of expense, and bankers, merchants, and bill-brokers, from the city, who vie with these scions of nobility in the tastefulness of their establishments."

"Well, I 'm glad, my dear, that the letter comes from the part of the west-end you think most favourably of; nevertheless, I should like to know something of the family in which this dear girl is likely to be placed."

"It just strikes me that I have heard Lady Almondbury well spoken of; my lord dealt with my late worthy employer for many years, and servants *will* talk of their lords and ladies with great freedom when they call to give orders — a practice I have always checked as much as possible, but which young and giddy clerks, who like gossip, are prone to encourage. Yes, I have heard Lady Almondbury spoken of as an excellent lady, of delicate health. Of his lordship I don't remember to have heard much, if anything."

"I 'm glad I had a nice new black silk dress, and a pretty cloak and bonnet, made for Miss Stratford," observed Mrs. Vernon, "for now they will come in quite handy; for those hard-hearted women, the Misses Pattersons have left her scarcely anything good to wear."

"We must fit her out with a neat stock of clothes, my dear, that she may appear respectably in whatever family she enters. — You 'll attend to this."

"Certainly, and with great pleasure."

The next day Selina, accompanied by Mrs. Vernon, went to Lady Almondbury's, in Grosvenor Square. They left the hired vehicle, in which they had come, before they reached the door, and then, with a timidity which neither could vanquish, they approached and knocked at the door. The porter, a grey-headed and portly man, with a rubicund face and swelled ankles, admitted them into the hall, and, having rung a bell, sent up by the footman who answered it, the note handed him by Mrs. Vernon. The porter eyed both as they stood in the hall with an expression of curiosity that somewhat disturbed them, this being the first time that either

had been exposed to a similar scrutiny, or had been allowed to remain standing in a hall.

"The ladies are requested to remain a few minutes in the waiting-room," said the footman who had taken up the note, and who threw open the door of a room that communicated with the hall.

"I 'm glad, my dear, that we have got in here, away from that stern-looking porter," observed Mrs. Vernon; "I did not half like the way he looked at us; it seems to me that I could better encounter fifty lords and ladies, however proud and haughty they might be, than be brought in contact with their servants."

"I experienced precisely the same feeling, my kind friend," observed Selina; but before she had time to say more they were summoned to the boudoir of Lady Almondbury. They found that lady seated in a *bergère*, propped up by pillows, and her fragile form and pallid cheeks but too well attested the delicacy of health which she urged as an apology for having kept them waiting. The tasteful and elegant decorations of the room, so far superior to anything that either Selina or her companion had ever previously seen, failed to draw their attention from the faded yet still lovely mistress of the mansion.

"Pray be seated," said she, gracefully bending her head, and pointing to chairs near her; "this young lady," and she looked kindly at Selina, "has never, I suppose, been out as a governess before."

Mrs. Vernon replied in the affirmative.

"I could have wished that she had been a few years older," resumed Lady Almondbury; "but her youth," and she smiled encouragingly, "is not an insuperable objection. I suppose you are a near relative, Madam?" said the Countess, turning to Mrs. Vernon.

"No, Madam; Miss Stratford is no relation of mine; she is an orphan, but her parents, and indeed herself, were known to my husband ever since this young lady was a few months old; and we are greatly attached to her."

Lady Almondbury looked kindly at the speaker, and then, with a glance full of pity and interest, at Selina; — her beautiful and changeful countenance denoted her sensibility.

"An orphan!" repeated Lady Almondbury, and she sighed deeply; "how old was Miss Stratford when she lost her mother?"

"Little more than a year, Madam."

Lady Almondbury again sighed, and, looking with increased kindness towards Selina, said, "I shall certainly give Miss Stratford a trial. Do not imagine that I at all doubt her abilites, but she is so young, and my little girl has been sadly spoiled by me, I am sorry to say. With health like mine, threatening every day to take me from my poor child, it is difficult to refrain from over-indulgence;" and Lady Almondbury's lips trembled with emotion as she spoke.

"Miss Stratford will, I am sure, Madam, be happy to give your Ladyship an opportunity of judging of her qualifications for the situation for which she offers herself; and, never having previously been out, she will be grateful for any advice."

Lady Almondbury, having examined Selina's attainments with a tact and delicacy that marked the extent of her own, professed herself so satisfied with the result, that she at once offered her very liberal terms, and requested that she would enter on her new duties with as little delay as possible. Mrs. Vernon explained that *hers* was the only reference Miss Stratford had to offer, frankly stating, as concisely as could be, why the Mesdames Patterson were ill-disposed to assist Selina's views.

"*Your* recommendation, Madam, will be quite sufficient," replied Lady Almondbury, perfectly satisfied, from the countenance and manner of Mrs. Vernon, that she would be safe in relying on her for the respectability and worthiness of any one she recommended.

"I will send for my little girl," added her ladyship, ringing a silver bell which soon brought a little page, who was dismissed in search of the Lady Adelaide. The young lady

came attended by a French *bonne*, who had hitherto taken charge of her.

Lady Adelaide was a lovely child, strikingly like her mother, into whose arms she rushed the moment she entered the room, and whom she half suffocated with her kisses.

"*Doucement, doucement, miladi*," said the French woman, "you will make *madame la comtesse* ill."

"So you always say, Felicité, whenever I kiss my own darling mamma," observed Lady Adelaide, poutingly, and, again throwing her arms around the neck of her mother, and pressing her to her heart.

"This is your governess, dearest. Miss Stratford, let me present your future pupil to you," said Lady Almondbury.

The child looked up, half timidly, half inquisitively, in the face of Selina, and then reached out her little dimpled hand to meet that of her new governess.

"*You* won't say Mamma spoils me, will you?" said she; then glancing at her French attendant, who shrugged her shoulders, and seemed very well disposed to assert her grounds for having often previously expressed that opinion, had she not been restrained by the presence of the countess. "Don't go away, for I am sure I shall like you. Do stay!" urged Lady Adelaide, holding the shawl of Selina.

"Miss Stratford will return in three or four days, my dear love, and if you are good will always remain with you," observed Lady Almondbury.

"But why can't she stay now, dear Mamma?"

"La voilà, toujours impatiente, toujours cherchant que tout le monde suive sa volonté," murmured the French woman, *sotto voce*.

"Miss Stratford has arrangements to make that will prevent her being able to remain with you at present, dearest; but three or four days will soon pass away, and then you will see her again."

Pleased that the little girl had taken a fancy to her, Selina met her advances half way, which gratified the mother as well

as the child; and when she took her leave, Lady Almondbury graciously and gracefully told Mrs. Vernon that she hoped she would often come and see Miss Stratford, when that young lady became an inmate of Almondbury House.

"Now, mind you come back, for I shall long to see you again, indeed I shall," said Lady Adelaide, as Mrs. Vernon and Selina withdrew, and escorted by the little page, who again answered the summons of the silver bell, were ushered down stairs.

"What a beautiful woman, and how kind and gentle!" exclaimed Selina, when, seated in the carriage that conveyed them, she found herself *tête-à-tête* with her friend Mrs. Vernon.

"Yes; Lady Almondbury is certainly a lovely, and appears to be a most amiable lady. What a pity it is that she should be in such very delicate health," observed Mrs. Vernon. "I fear her days are numbered, for never have I seen more marked symptoms of that fatal malady, consumption, than in her still beautiful face."

"May Heaven avert it!" replied Selina; "for, apart from all selfish considerations, I already feel a strong interest in, and predisposition to like Lady Almondbury and my future little pupil."

"I too, entertain a similar sentiment towards them, and shall part from you with mitigated pain and regret, from the belief that you will be with amiable and kind persons. It will also be a great comfort to be permitted to visit you, dearest Selina; a privilege not often accorded to the friends or relatives of governesses."

"How fortunate I am, dear Mrs. Vernon, to have found a situation with such a family."

"Heaven grant that nothing may occur to render it less agreeable than you anticipate."

Mr. Vernon was equally pleased as his wife when he heard that Selina had formed an engagement which seemed in every sense to promise well. He nevertheless told her to remember, that, should any unforeseen event occur to render her stay in

Lady Almondbury's family disagreeable to her, she was always to look upon his house as her home, to which she would ever be welcomed, as if she were his own child. The next day he commissioned his kind-hearted wife to purchase all that was requisite to enable Selina to appear in a suitable manner in the situation she was about to enter. Nor did he forget, knowing the value of regularity with regard to time, to buy her a neat watch, to replace the more costly one taken possession of by the Mesdames Patterson. He also forced into her hand, at parting, a small purse well stocked, to meet the exigences that might occur before her first quarter's salary became due. Selina could not leave her kind friends without tears; nor were they less moved.

When left together, "Let us," said Mrs. Vernon, "prove our affection for the dear girl better than by vain regrets for her absence. Let us give up a few of our little luxuries, that we can well dispense with, and appropriate the savings to form a fund for her to inherit at our deaths. Though small it will be useful."

"An excellent thought, my dear wife; but so I must say all your thoughts are. Yes, there are many things which we can do without, and the absence of which, so far from being felt to be privations, will be sources of complacency, when the motive and result are taken into consideration."

"Just like you, my dear John, ever ready to do a kind action," said Mrs. Vernon, taking the hand of her husband, and pressing her lips to his cheek. "Now, mind, the first thing to be given up is our annual holiday of a fortnight by the sea-side, which I know you only undertook because you fancied it necessary for my health, which it really is not, for I never was in better health. That will be a saving of twelve or fifteen pounds; and the next thing to be given up is the new silk gown, cloak, and bonnet you buy for me every Christmas; there will be a saving of twelve pounds more; so fancy, twenty-five, or twenty-seven pounds saved in things that can be perfectly well done without."

"No, my dear Mary, your health must not suffer from

losing your yearly trip to the sea. *That* would never do; and, as to giving up the pleasure of buying your Christmas gifts, and seeing you look so well in them, I have not self-denial enough to do that. No, let the savings be on *my* side, and not on yours. I can make out a list as long as my arm, of things I can perfectly do without; nay, be all the better for leaving off."

"Now don't provoke me, John. You know you 're always wanting to give up all your little comforts, but won't hear of mine being touched. Yes you are — you may shake your head, but it 's all true. Don't you remember when our poor neighbour Tracey's house was burnt to the ground, and all his property destroyed, how you gave up buying any thing, or drinking a glass of wine for a whole year, in order that you might help him?"

"Yes, and I remember also, Mary, that our first quarrel was because I would not let you strip yourself of your comforts on that occasion."

"Well, but haven't I as good a right to give up my comforts, as you have to give up yours? Yet you always will prevent me," and Mrs. Vernon looked half-offended.

Her husband glanced at her with affection beaming in his eyes, and drawing her fondly towards him, said, "If you knew, my dear Mary, the comfort and blessing you have been for thirty years to me, you could well understand how easily I can give up what other persons think comforts, or even necessaries."

There was such truthfulness in his look and voice, that his wife's eyes became suffused with tears, and she hid them in that fond and faithful breast, murmuring, half indistinctly from emotion, "That it was just like him, always carrying every thing his own way, and making her love him better every day of her life."

Selina Stratford had entered her new home, thankful to Divine Providence for having given her one that offered so many causes for gratitude. She found a suite of rooms at Almondbury House appropriated to her use, and fitted up in a

style of elegance and comfort that left nothing to be desired. Her pupil welcomed her with every demonstration of satisfaction; and, though more than usually suffering that day, Lady Almondbury received her in her dressing-room, and initiated her into the daily routine her ladyship wished to be preserved. A male and female attendant were appointed to receive her orders; a carriage was to be ready every day to convey her pupil and herself to Kensington Gardens; and Lady Almondbury told her she must not hesitate in commanding any thing requisite for her use.

CHAPTER XVI.

The first week of Selina's residence in Almondbury House passed off most agreeably to her. The kindness of its fair and gentle mistress, and the docility of her pupil, rendered her situation even more agreeable than her most sanguine hopes could have anticipated; and grateful was she to Providence for having found so eligible a home. When the lessons were over, by Lady Almondbury's desire, she would come with her pupil and sit with her ladyship; conversing, or playing and singing, according to the wish of Lady Almondbury, who, herself an admirable musician, and very fond of music, was so extremely indulgent in judging the performance of others, that Selina, though very timid at first singing before so perfect a judge, soon learned not to fear her criticism, and acquired much benefit from the refined taste of her kind patroness. The lessons in drawing would also often be given in presence of the countess, who marked with pleasure the progress her child made in this accomplishment.

The rapid improvement soon visible in this interesting child was a source of the greatest gratification to Lady Almondbury, while it enhanced her esteem and regard for Selina, to whom she believed it was due. When Lady Adelaide had gone to bed, Lady Almondbury would regularly summon the governess to her boudoir to read aloud for her or to converse; and by degrees formed such a friendship for her, and

evinced such an interest, that she drew from her every incident of her past life. The more Selina knew the mother of her pupil, the more did her attachment for her increase. Never previously had she known so fascinating and amiable a person; and as her fine qualities became revealed, she more than ever felt surprised that the husband of such a woman, and in so delicate a state of health too, could leave her for weeks, while he pursued his own amusement, shooting in the Highlands of Scotland, where he had hired a moor for the season. It struck her also as strange that so little reference was made to Lord Almondbury by his wife or child, and as she acquired a greater knowledge of the affectionate nature of both, she felt disposed to augur ill of him from this circumstance.

One day Lady Almondbury announced to her daughter that her papa might be expected home in a day or two.

"What, *so soon*, Mamma?" exclaimed the child, her whole countenance changing from its usual sweet expression to one of dissatisfaction.

Lady Almondbury's pale cheek became flushed for a moment, for she knew the inference that must be drawn from the little girl's *naïve* remark; but fearful of drawing forth a further corroboration of how little Lady Adelaide had missed or regretted the long absence of her father, she dropped the subject. Not so the child, who after a few minutes' silence, and with a more gloomy expression of countenance than Selina had ever previously seen her wear, she observed, "I thought papa would stay away a long time, Mamma."

"He has been absent several weeks, my love."

"Has he indeed! Well I 'm sure I thought it had been only one or two," was the artless reply.

There was a nervous trepidation in the manner of Lady Almondbury for the rest of the day; and, towards evening, a feverish excitement replaced the usual gentle calmness and sweetness that formed so peculiar a characteristic in her. The little silver bell was repeatedly had recourse to, and the *maître d'hôtel* and housekeeper had been more than once sum-

moned to her ladyship's presence, to receive injunctions to neglect nothing in the preparations for their lord's arrival. The cook must have every thing ready to furnish a repast for his lordship with as little delay as possible, to be served as soon after his arrival as he might desire. His bath must be ready, his wines in ice; the morning and evening papers ironed, and laid on his library table; and in short so numerous and minute were the orders given by the countess for the reception of her lord, that even a less observant person than Selina might have guessed that there was more of fear than of love in this assiduity, even had not the nervousness and changed aspect of both mother and child betrayed that it was not a fond husband and father, but an *exigeant* domestic tyrant, for whom these preparations were made. Lord Almondbury came not that evening, but his wife gave instructions that every thing should be kept prepared in case he arrived during the night. The next day, and another passed, and he appeared not, the whole establishment being kept on the *qui vive;* but on the evening of the fourth day from that on which he had been expected, he arrived.

Selina was in the boudoir with Lady Almondbury when his lordship entered it, and, had any doubts existed in her mind with regard to his character, they would speedily have been dispelled by the manner in which he met his charming and suffering wife after a separation of so many weeks.

"How are you, Frances? Much as usual, I suppose; always ailing, or at least always complaining;" and he took the trembling little hand that was extended to him, and just touched the brow of his wife with his lips. He stared rudely at Selina, but without bowing or showing any of the usual observances which men show to women in similar circumstances. Lady Almondbury quickly noticed this want of respect towards her favourite, and hastened to name her, saying, "This young lady is Miss Stratford, whom I wrote to you about."

"Oh, Adelaide's governess, is it? Then I pity her, for by Jupiter she will have anything but a pleasant time with

that tiresome troublesome girl, unless she rules her with a firm hand."

Lady Almondbury changed colour, and her eyes filled with tears, which she turned her head to conceal, but her husband had noticed them, and there was something brutal in the mode in which he evinced his recognition of his wife's wounded feelings.

"What! tears!" exclaimed he, "and all because I speak my mind about Adelaide, who, you must confess, is the most disagreeable girl in the world."

Anxious to change the subject, Lady Almondbury, with an effort to control her emotion, that merited a better reward than she could hope from her tyrannical lord and master, expressed a hope that he had enjoyed his sojourn in Scotland, and had good sport.

"Devilish bad, I can tell you; but that was owing to my being such a fool as to have taken two fellows with me, who are as good shots as myself, and who consequently destroyed more game than I expected. I asked them, merely to have some one to talk to in the evenings, in case I did not fall asleep; but never again will I take a fellow who is a good shot — that I 'm determined on. What's going on in town? But what 's the use of asking you? I dare say you know no more than Adelaide, probably less, for she most likely hears the gossip of the servants."

"Miss Stratford will guard against that evil," observed Lady Almondbury.

"I must go and have some dinner, and, as usual, I dare say I shall have a devilish bad one; but that is sure to be the case when the mistress of a house is sickly and lives on slops. Now it 's quite a pleasure to dine at Merlingham's or Oxenford's; for their wives are epicures, and understand the merits of a good *cuisine;* while you, Frances," and he glanced contemptuously towards his wife, "can appreciate nothing beyond a boiled chicken, a *consommé*, or some similarly insipid food for invalids."

When Lord Almondbury left the room, a silence of some

duration ensued. It was evident that his wife was pained and embarrassed, and when she spoke it was to attempt some excuse for him.

"Men, and particularly those blessed with strong constitutions," observed Lady Almondbury, "are prone to dislike sick rooms, if not sick people; it is but natural," and a deep sigh followed the admission, "for those to whom illness is a stranger cannot make allowance for the infirmities of invalids, or the privations and constraint to which they must submit."

Selina did not venture to reply, but she thought that hard indeed must be the heart, and unkind the nature of him, whose conduct drew from his fair and gentle wife this attempt to excuse it; but in proportion as her bad opinion of him increased did her high one of Lady Almondbury become more firmly established. Her patience and resignation under severe physical suffering, unrelieved, too, by the affection or attention of him who ought to have endeavoured to lighten her sense of them, created the liveliest interest, joined to the most profound respect for her, in the heart of Selina, who devoted herself, with unceasing care, not only to the discharge of her duty towards her pupil, but to render the confinement of Lady Almondbury less irksome and dull than it had hitherto been, and endeavoured to amuse and interest the lonely valetudinarian, and, above all, delighted her by drawing forth in her presence proofs of the rapid progress made by Lady Adelaide, whose natural cleverness, and facility in acquiring knowledge, was really most gratifying.

The first time Selina was present at an interview between Lord Almondbury and his daughter, which took place in the boudoir of Lady Almondbury, she was surprised, and, truth to say, shocked, at the want of natural affection on both sides. The father only nodded to the child, and she in return merely made him a formal curtsey.

"Go and kiss papa, my dear," said the fond mother timidly.

"I beg to be excused," was the hard speech of the father.

"I have no pleasure in being kissed by children, and above all when the mark of affection is commanded, and not spontaneous."

"Adelaide would, I am sure, be glad to embrace you, if you would encourage her a little," remarked Lady Almondbury timidly.

"Do you wish to kiss me, young lady?" demanded the unnatural parent, with a most forbidding scowl.

"No," replied the child; "you never wish to kiss *me*, and so I don't want to kiss *you*."

"Adelaide, my dear," said Lady Almondbury; "you should not—"

"What! would you make the girl false?" exclaimed the father angrily. "If she has one good quality in her perverse nature — that of speaking the truth — why should you wish to destroy it?"

"You mistake; indeed you do," said the mother; "you check all your child's advances by your sternness towards her; but, be assured, it only requires a little kindness to make her love you as fondly as she does me."

"Do you love me?" demanded Lord Almondbury, again looking sternly at the little girl.

"No, I don't," was the honest reply.

"Well, I like you for your frankness, for I hate hypocrisy and fawning," was the ungracious observation.

"You would be pleased to see the progress Adelaide has made in her studies since she has had the advantage of being under Miss Stratford's care," said Lady Almondbury.

"Oh! spare me the exhibition," exclaimed Lord Almondbury; "the bare notion sets me yawning!" and, suiting the action to the word, he opened his mouth to its utmost extent, and stretched his arms. "Nothing bores me so much as when mothers take it into their heads to show off their children, who, examined by their teachers, repeat their lessons by rote, like parrots, and understand them as little."

Lady Almondbury sighed, but did not attempt to reason with her husband. She too well knew the utter uselessness

of such a measure, but her silence offended her tyrant almost as much as words would have done, for he arose and left the room, muttering something about "persons who set themselves up as martyrs, in order to excite commiseration."

When the door closed after him, Lady Adelaide rushed to her mother, and fondly embraced her.

"Dear, darling Mamma," exclaimed the affectionate girl, "how I do love you and hate papa!"

"Adelaide, how you shock, how you distress me! Do you not know that it is most sinful, most wicked, for a child not to love its father?"

"But papa does not love *me* the least bit, indeed he doesn't, dear Mamma; and how can I love him, when he doesn't love me?"

"Because it is your duty, Adelaide; how often have I told you this, and repeated to you the deep pain you inflict on me by not showing a proper affection to your father!"

"I 'm very sorry to give *you* pain, dear kind Mamma; but I don't know what to do. You tell me, and so does dear Miss Stratford, that I must always speak the truth. Now, if I say I love papa, it will not be the truth; and, though I try all I can to love him, I can't; indeed I can't, Mamma!" and the child's eyes filled with tears, and she hid her face in her mother's bosom.

"You will turn your attention to this point," said Lady Almondbury to Selina in Italian. "It is true, and I deeply regret it; Lord Almondbury does not like children, and least of all girls. He was greatly disappointed when this dear child was born; he wished for a boy; most, if not all, men do; and he has never quite got over the disappointment. Point out to my poor Adelaide her duty; make her understand that she is to conciliate her father by every means in her power, for the first wish of my heart is, — knowing how precarious my life is, on how frail a thread it depends, — is to see a mutual affection spring up where it is so natural it should be. How terrible will it be for my poor child, when I am taken from

her, to find neither consolation nor affection in her remaining parent!"

Although the little girl did not understand Italian, the mournful expression of her mother's face, and the tremulous movement of her lips, betrayed her agitation, and the little girl surmised her grief; so, clinging fondly to her mother's breast, and looking up in her face exclaimed, "Ah, dearest Mamma! do not look so sad, and I will do anything to please you. Yes, I will try ever so much to love papa; indeed I will, for I can't bear to see you unhappy; indeed I can't!"

A few days after this scene Selina and her pupil were passing through the park, on their route to take their daily walk in Kensington Gardens. They saw Lord Almondbury riding with a distinguished-looking elderly man, who seemed to draw his lordship's attention to them. The carriage passed on, without one sign of recognition from the father to his child, nor did a single smile, on her part, mark Lady Adelaide's notice of her parent.

"What a fine countenance the young lady in your carriage has!" observed the companion of Lord Almondbury.

"Yes," replied he; "she has a very fine face. It is a pity, however, that she happens to be one of the saints — a perfect pattern of propriety and prudence, in the shape of a governess to my daughter."

"But in the governess of one's daughter such peculiarities are surely not to be found fault with!" was the reply.

"Perhaps not always; but there *are* certain positions, and mine is one of them, in which, when a pretty girl is by chance thrown in one's way, without one's having sought her, it would be very agreeable to find that she was neither cold nor prudish."

"I must confess, although I do not pretend to be more severe than most other men, that I think one's sins should never be committed at home, and that the roof beneath which dwell a wife and child should be sacred. To corrupt the *morals* of the person to whom is confided the education of a daughter, is, in my opinion, a crime of deep dye."

"When such crimes, as you term them, are committed, wives are always to blame. If they *will* be so foolish as to throw temptation in the way of poor weak men, they must take the consequences."

"That is, in other words, if a wife confides in the faith and honour of her husband, which every pure-minded one is prone to do, she ought, according to your doctrine, to be punished for her misplaced confidence. It is precisely this sort of reasoning that renders wives so fearful of engaging handsome governesses, and leaves the last so frequently without employment, as if the gift of beauty debarred them from the possession of the still more precious one — virtue. I seldom see a pretty woman enacting the difficult and painful *rôle* of governess, without observing that she is exposed to the most humiliating suspicions. The common civility due to every one of the sex cannot be paid her, without its exciting surmises, which originate less in any just ground, furnished by the slightest levity or encouragement on her part, than in the too well-founded knowledge of the laxity of principle of our sex."

"I am afraid the best of us all are but sad sinners," observed Lord Almondbury, with a self-complacency more suited to the admission of a community in the good qualities of mankind than in that which dishonours them. This evident self-complacency seemed to disgust his companion, who abruptly wished him good morning, and turned his horse's head in another direction.

CHAPTER XVII.

"YES," soliloquized Lord Almondbury, "she is a very beautiful girl, and who knows whether she be really as cold and reserved as she appears. Women, even the most youthful of the sex, are such adepts in deception! It is, however, well worth while to ascertain this point; and as faint heart never won fair lady, I will make the experiment. But how is it to be made? Ah! there 's the question. She is never to

be seen alone, — Adelaide is with her all day, and she spends her evenings with my wife. She walks every day in Kensington Gardens, I know, and is now there. *Allons*, I'll stroll there as if by chance, enact *le bon* papa by walking with my daughter, and judge by Miss Stratford's manner how far I may venture. She is so devilish pretty that it is worth while trying to please her."

The result of these cogitations was, his lordship putting his horse into a canter, and directing his course towards another entrance to Kensington Gardens than that at which his carriage had a short time previously set down his daughter and her governess; for he did not wish to furnish a topic for the gossiping of his groom, coachman, and footman, who might form suspicions of his motive for going there. A man conscious of his own evil intentions is ever prone to imagine that others will detect them; hence the wicked are much more on their guard than the good, and by a cunning, which is the fruit of their evil qualities, often escape a censure to which the artless and undesigning but too frequently lay themselves open, by a want of attention to appearances.

Lord Almondbury had not long entered Kensington Gardens when he saw Selina Stratford and her pupil at a little distance, and as they walked on before him, he had an opportunity of observing the attention excited by Selina; every man that encountered her, pausing, when she passed, to look after her, while she moved on wholly unconscious that she was an object of general attraction.

Lord Almondbury's was a mind to be influenced by the opinions of other men in certain points. Struck at the first view by the beauty of Selina, he now became still more disposed to yield to its attraction, as he beheld the admiration it excited in others, and reflected that in all probability, some one of those who now paused to gaze on her, would discover her abode, and address to her by letter the declaration he was so anxious not to be forestalled in.

"Yes, there is no time to be lost," thought he, as he quickened his pace to overtake her he was so anxious to join.

No symptoms of pleasure at the unexpected meeting beamed in the countenance of his only child, and the usually reserved deportment of her governess assumed even a more chilling aspect as he signified his intention of walking with them. Somewhat awed by Selina's manner, he took the hand of his daughter, instead of remaining by her side as he had originally intended, and then uttered something about his desire of becoming better acquainted with Lady Adelaide.

"You speak Italian, I believe, Miss Stratford?" observed he.

Selina replied in the affirmative.

"Yes, I heard you conversing with Lady Almondbury in that language the other day, and your pronunciation struck me to be so pure, that it occurred to me that it would be a very good opportunity for me to brush up my Italian a little, which I have greatly neglected for some time, by chatting with you."

Selina made no reply; but Lady Adelaide said, "O pray speak French, Papa, for then I can understand what is said, for I know French very well, don't I, dear Miss Stratford?"

The father bit his nether lip, and looked angry; but after a moment's reflection, he resumed, "Well, then, Adelaide, as you already know French so well, the sooner you learn Italian the better, and by hearing Miss Stratford and me converse you will at least acquire a familiarity with the accent, if not the sense of what we utter."

He then turned to Selina, and in tolerably good Italian observed, "that he was not surprised to see the general admiration her beauty excited, that all men paid homage to it as she passed, but that none felt its power so profoundly as he did."

Selina requested that he would select any other subject for his conversation, as no one could be so little acceptable to her as that; and the grave and dignified manner in which she made this reproof, evinced the truth of her assertion.

"But how is it possible to forbear speaking of that which fills the heart?" said he. "Throw off this coldness and re-

serve. I love you, am rich, and disposed to be generous. I can secure you independence, and will so conduct myself that no suspicion shall light on you. Or, if you prefer it, I will at once provide you with a house and establishment suitable to your merit, and — "

"Hold, my Lord, and no longer insult my ears by such language," and the cheeks of Selina were crimsoned with indignation and wounded virtue.

"I am sure, Papa, Miss Stratford does not like speaking Italian with you," said little Lady Adelaide, "for see how red her face has got; and I never saw her look angry before."

"Don't be such a prude, lovely girl," resumed Lord Almondbury. "I really would not for worlds insult or pain you; but when I see a beautiful creature like you, immured three parts of the day in a dull school-room, labouring to instruct a spoilt girl like mine, and shut up all the evening in a boudoir that no breath of air ever visits, trying to amuse a poor hypochondriac that is no longer amuseable, and all for a paltry salary, much less than I give my valet, by Jove I can't stand it; and I long to place you where every luxury, every pleasure will court your acceptance."

"I will no longer listen to such insults, my Lord," said Selina, turning to leave the garden. "My position in your Lordship's family should have saved me from them," and tears filled her eyes and impeded her utterance.

"I knew you would make Miss Stratford angry. See how you have made her weep," said Lady Adelaide. "Mamma never makes her cry when *she* speaks Italian to her."

"That troublesome child will make mischief by telling tales, unless you recover your calmness. For your own sake, if not for mine, for the sake of Lady Almondbury, whose delicate health renders any shock dangerous, assume your usual air and manner, and I promise that I will say no more on this subject."

Selina was so fluttered and agitated that she found great difficulty in subduing her feelings sufficiently to assume a calm demeanour, although she was fully aware of the necessity of it,

if only to avoid the inquisitive glances of the passers by, who had noticed her heightened colour and humid eyes. She trembled, too, lest her pupil should reveal to Lady Almondbury *her* version of the scene that had just occurred; for the simple statement that Lord Almondbury had joined them in Kensington Gardens, and spoken all the time in Italian to her governess; had made her very angry, and brought tears to her eyes, would be quite enough to enlighten Lady Almondbury on the whole fact, and to inflict a pain and chagrin which, in her feeble state, it was of the greatest importance she should be spared. Yet to continue in the house, after the undisguised avowal of passion made by Lord Almondbury, she felt would be wrong. Cruel man! to compel her to resign a situation in which she had been so happy, and where she had been of use to the interesting and amiable invalid, as well as to her dear little pupil. Such were the thoughts that filled her mind, as silently she retraced her steps to the carriage.

Vexed and disappointed at his utter failure in his base designs, Lord Almondbury walked to the gate where he had left his horse, muttering "curses not loud but deep" on what he called the folly of his intended victim. "I hope she won't be such a confounded simpleton as to tell Lady Almondbury," thought he. "*That* would be deucedly disagreeable. Not that I have any scene to fear with *her*, for I must do her the justice to say that she never tries any. Whatever her suspicions may be that I am a *mauvais sujet*, she never treated me to a scene of jealousy yet, and so much the better for her; for while she utters no reproaches I feel myself compelled to observe some appearance, at least, of good terms with her. Were she to act differently I could not answer for myself. Women are great fools when they betray their knowledge, or even their suspicions, of their husbands' infidelity; for then they absolve them from the necessity of keeping up appearance, and harden them against the shame first experienced when a man goes astray. My wife's pale cheek, melancholy look, and patient endurance, often have more effect on me, than all the reproaches that a jealous wife could utter in a long life. Yes, positively, I sometimes feel for the poor thing, especially when I remember how passionately she once loved, and how entirely she trusted me. Heigh ho! Poor Frances! The first few months of our marriage were indeed halcyon

days. She so trusting, I so fond. It is a pity it could not last! Then she became *enceinte*, got ill, lost her beauty. Women *enceinte* always do: could go with me no where, and although at first she looked surprised, nay, hurt too, that I would not stay at home to nurse her, she never uttered a request on the subject; and I soon found myself back with my old cronies, on the same terms as previously to my marriage; and then, when my wife was confined, and of a girl too, instead of a boy, on which I had set my heart, she was so occupied and delighted with her little *pouparde*, that I saw no necessity to fall back into conjugal thraldom. Then her health began to give way. There must be consumption in her family, or what else could make her always ill? The doctors said it was something that preyed on her mind. Cunning dogs! they had heard, I suppose, of some of my proceedings, and intended that as a hint. I would not take it; besides, I am sure her malady was not of the mind, but of the chest. But even were it otherwise, what could I do? Was I to turn *garde malade*, or enact the *rôle* of a doting husband when I no longer felt the inclination? Women are so foolish and unreasonable; they expect, when they marry, that husbands are to continue lovers for ever, and picture to themselves, poor dupes, that their homes are to be the abodes of never-ceasing bliss. When they find themselves disappointed in these expectations, instead of taking it philosophically, they either abandon themselves to regret, or become regular coquettes to revenge on all men the wrongs they imagine they have received from one. Now we men are wiser. *We* have had experience in love affairs, and know that time, sooner or later, will render us indifferent to the charms we once adored, as well as efface from our hearts any wounds they may have sustained. *We* do not lament when we see indifference replace passion in the hearts of our wives; *au contraire*, it is an end much to be desired, for it saves a poor devil from the jealous scenes he will inevitably be exposed to when his passion cools, which it is sure to do, and his wife's continues. I verily believe that of my poor Frances would have gone on to the end of the chapter, if I had not taken such pains to destroy all her bright illusions, and disenchant her with her idol — myself. But what the deuce could I do? I could not submit to the trammels imposed by the *exigeance* of a love-sick spouse; consequently, to recover and secure

my liberty, I was compelled to let her see me in my natural character, and the result has been, that the discovery has injured her peace, and impaired a health never strong enough to resist a disappointment of the heart. Women of her peculiar temperament and character should never marry, for as no man can continue to enact the enamoured lover after he has been a year a husband, they are certain to be disappointed, and to be unhappy for years, if not for ever, under the sense of it."

So reasoned Lord Almondbury. It never occurred to him that men of *his* peculiar temperament and character should never marry, certain as he was, that such men could never secure the happiness of a right-minded and amiable wife. No, he looked on women as born to submit to men, their lords and masters, and would have been ready to exclaim, with the sultan in a French opera, when he quits one favourite sultana, who weeps his infidelity, for another and newer flame,

"Dissimulez votre peine, et respectez mes plaisirs."

Lady Almondbury had too much pride and delicacy to reproach her husband, even had she not been well-convinced of the utter uselessness of such a measure. Aware that he no longer loved her, her sole wish was to retain his respect, and to see him entertain for their child some portion of that affection, the absence of which not only deeply pained her, but was calculated to have an injurious effect on the little girl, who had already evinced, on many occasions, her consciousness of the indifference, if not dislike, of her father towards her. The patience and resignation with which Lady Almondbury submitted to the neglect and unkindness of her unfeeling and selfish husband, far from operating favourably on his mind, or ensuring his gratitude, served only to encourage his wilfulness. Her forbearance he looked on as a tacit toleration of his conduct; nay, when vexed or irritated abroad, he returned to his own house to vent on the nervous and sensitive invalid the ebullition of a temper never good, but now incurably spoilt by self-indulgence.

Selina experienced an insuperable disinclination to inform Lady Almondbury of the interview with her lord in Kensington Gardens; she felt that she could not name it without betraying, in her countenance at least, some symptoms of the disgust and

indignation it had excited in her breast; and yet *not* to state it, might, if the child repeated it, and the chances were that she would, expose her to suspicion. How painful and humiliating was her position! and how did she despise him who had so rendered it! She wished that she could refer to the interview when her pupil was not present, for she feared some *naïve* remark of the clever child might make the mother *au fait* of the truth; and gladly would she have saved the interesting and amiable invalid the chagrin which she knew it must inflict on her; but, as she could have no opportunity before night of a *tête-à-tête* with Lady Almondbury, and must conduct her pupil to the *boudoir*, as usual, before the child retired to bed, no choice was left, but to name the fact as concisely as possible.

"I hope you had a pleasant walk, Miss Stratford," said Lady Almondbury.

"Yes; that is to say, no," was the incoherent reply, Selina blushing to her very temples, from the consciousness of the surprise it must occasion, but, taken unawares by the commonplace, but kindly-meant question. She felt that Lady Almondbury's eyes were fixed on her face, and her blushes and confusion increased in consequence. It was necessary to say something, and she struggled to appear calm while stating the interview with Lord Almondbury; but her manner was so unlike its usual collected and unembarrassed tone, that Lady Almondbury, alarmed by her changeful cheek and visible emotion, asked her if she were ill, and evinced such kindness and interest in putting the question, as achieved a total triumph over the self-control of Selina, who burst into tears.

"Dear, good Miss Stratford has been made ill, I am sure, by papa," said Lady Adelaide; "he *would* stay and walk with us, though he saw Miss Stratford disliked it; and would talk Italian to her all the time, though she wished to speak French or English. He looked very angry when Miss Stratford would not stay any longer in the gardens, and then walked away to another gate quite in a passion."

Lady Almondbury became as pale as marble; her lips quivered with emotion, and she glanced with pitying kindness at Selina, now comprehending the cause of her agitation. Making an effort to recover composure, she turned to her

daughter, and gravely rebuked her for commenting on the actions of her papa.

"It is ungrateful, Adelaide," said she, "so to receive what was meant kindly. It was natural for your papa, seeing you walking, to join you, and question Miss Stratford on your progress; and he preferred doing this in a language you do not speak."

The little girl looked abashed, but not convinced; and, while blushes still mantled on her cheek, she turned to her mother, and, with the pertinacity peculiar to over-indulged children, anxious to exculpate herself from the charge of ingratitude, she demanded, "Why then, Mamma, was papa so very much displeased? Good, kind Miss Stratford tells me she is satisfied with me, and would tell papa the same, so that he could not be angry at that."

This logic was so conclusive, that Lady Almondbury could not refute it; but her pale cheek became tinged with red, and her ill-concealed embarrassment pained Selina so much, that she checked the further remarks of the clever child by quickly changing the subject.

When, as usual, she was that evening summoned to the *boudoir* of Lady Almondbury, she felt conscious of a feeling of timidity and constraint never previously experienced since her first entrance into the establishment, nor did the increased paleness, or heavy eyes, betraying the traces of recent tears, of the amiable invalid, help to reassure her, although Lady Almondbury's manner, always kind and gentle, was even more so than before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

With all the intuitive tact and quickness of apprehension that peculiarly appertain to women of delicacy and sentiment, Lady Almondbury readily divined the whole affair of the *rencontre* in Kensington Gardens, and it needed not the *naïve* disclosures of her daughter to make the mortifying truth deeply, painfully, felt. She could duly appreciate the motives that influenced the conduct of Selina. She saw at a glance the embarrasment and chagrin under which the poor girl laboured, and anxious to relieve her, yet unwilling to censure Lord Almondbury, she hardly knew how to act, or what to say. She

could not, without great regret and reluctance, contemplate a separation from one whose society had soothed her solitude, and rendered many an hour of pain and languor, more endurable. A long illness is apt to engender selfishness even in persons who, previously to its assaults, had been strangers to this too common defect. The *ennui* peculiar to days of physical suffering, and the lassitude that never fails to accompany it, rendering all occupation, either mental or bodily, most difficult and fatiguing, if not impracticable, had been often and painfully experienced by the valetudinarian. The relief consequently afforded by the society of one who loved her, was too great and welcome to be resigned without deep regret; and to save it, Lady Almondbury, yielding for the first time in *her* life to the dictates of selfishness, deliberated whether or not she might still retain the presence of her, who had been such a comforter to *her*, and so excellent a teacher to her child. Where could she hope to find a governess with equal ability and zeal, to replace Miss Stratford near Lady Adelaide? This last reflection was paramount to all others in the mother's heart, and triumphed over the scruples entertained since the discovery of the meeting at Kensington Gardens, on the propriety of retaining Selina under a roof where she might be exposed to the insulting pursuit of a lawless libertine, who respected neither the home of his wife nor child, nor the purity of her to whom the education of that only child was confided. Of the virtue of Selina, Lady Almondbury entertained not a single doubt, for there was that native dignity and self-respect, inseparable from conscious rectitude, about her, that convinced Lady Almondbury that the arts of even the most practised seducer would be tried in vain on one so right-minded. But, although the virtue of the orphan might escape triumphant from all snares, would she, herself a mother, be justified in retaining her where her reputation might suffer, were the libertine views of Lord Almondbury once made known to others, as they had so lately been made evident to herself? While these painful reflections were passing in the mind of Lady Almondbury, thoughts of a no less disagreeable nature occupied Selina. How was she to break to her kind patroness her desire to withdraw from her house, without exciting mortifying suspicions of the cause? Yet she felt that this step must be taken; for to remain would

be to grant a tacit encouragement to the unprincipled Lord Almondbury to renew his dishonourable and insulting proposals; the bare recollection of which sent the blood to her cheeks, and made her heart throb with indignation.

Never had a half hour passed so painfully and slowly in that *boudoir* since Selina Stratford had become an inmate in the mansion, as while these thoughts were passing in the minds of Lady Almondbury and herself. Each felt unwilling to break silence, knowing that it must be to enter on a subject most painful to both; and this consciousness increased their embarassment. At length Lady Almondbury spoke, although undecided what line of conduct to adopt. *She* would be governed by what Selina should determine on; and tremulous from anticipation that her fears would be realised, that the companion whose society had so cheered the long and weary hours of her sick chamber would announce her intention of leaving her, she observed "I fear, my dear Miss Stratford, that you are not quite well." Kindness is never more deeply felt than when we are meditating a separation from those who bestow it.

The sweet and affectionate tone in which her patroness uttered these few words, brought tears to the eyes of Selina, and her tongue faltered as she replied — "No, dear Lady, I am not ill, but" — and here she paused, and for a few minutes was speechless from emotion.

"Do not distress yourself, my dear and amiable young friend," said Lady Almondbury. "If you have any thing painful to communicate, and your agitation but too well prepares me for it, delay pronouncing it until you are more calm, until I too am better able to bear it than at present;" and Lady Almondbury became paler than before, and tears stood in her eyes. She extended her white and attenuated hand to Selina, who pressed it to her lips, and as she felt it tremble in her own, a pang passed through her heart at the notion that she must leave one from whom she had experienced such unvarying kindness and encouragement, and at a period too, when custom had rendered her efforts to please and be useful to the dear invalid more necessary and acceptable.

"I fear I must leave you, dear Lady," said Selina, feeling the absolute necessity of not postponing the announcement of her intention.

"I feared so," replied Lady Almondbury, and she pressed the hand of Selina, in which her own still rested.

"Circumstances," resumed Selina, "over which I have no control, compel this, to me, most painful step; for your goodness to me, dear Lady, the gratitude it has created in my heart, and the affection I feel for dear Lady Adelaide, render my parting from you one of the most painful trials of my life."

"You know not how dear, how necessary you are become to me, dear Miss Stratford," said Lady Almondbury; careful not to inquire the cause for a step so pregnant with regret to her. Too well did she divine the motive for Selina's departure; but feelings of delicacy towards her, as well as an unwillingness to touch on a subject that must inculpate her husband — the once passionately loved partner of her home and heart, the still dear father of her child — sealed her lips from betraying her knowledge of it. She paused, while deliberating with herself what step to take; and then again pressing Selina's hand, earnestly requested her not to leave her for a few weeks more at least; adding, "I shall be so lonely, dear Miss Stratford; for Lord Almondbury is going to France for a couple of months."

Selina well understood what this intelligence meant. It was a delicate mode of satisfying her mind, that, in yielding to the request of her kind and amiable patroness of remaining a few weeks longer, she need not fear being exposed to any more insults from Lord Almondbury. She felt pleasure in assenting to the proposal, and Lady Almondbury, gratified at having secured the society of a companion so congenial to her taste, even for a few more weeks, resumed her usual calm and sweet manner, and evinced a more than ordinary interest in her favourite.

As Selina looked on her beautiful face — still lovely in spite of the ravages of disease, and that fragile form so shadowy, yet graceful, which conveyed the notion that it was already fit for the skies — she felt as if in the presence of a being purified from all earth's passions and stains, who was only for a brief period lent to this world, and who might soon, too soon, be called to that heaven, which seemed to be her native sphere.

The poet who asserted that a brave man, struggling with misfortune, was one of the noblest sights, might have added,

that a woman, young, beautiful, and good, disappointed in her tenderest affections, resigning herself to a premature grave, and sustaining the assaults of a cureless and painful malady without murmuring, was no less so. Every sentence uttered by Lady Almondbury was instinct with patient sweetness; it was as if disease, in destroying the mortal part, had but more revealed the immortal; as if a veil had been removed from the soul, and allowed its perfection to be all disclosed. A thousand sad reflections crowded into her mind, as she listened to the low, clear, harmonious accents, and gazed on the almost transparent face, radiant with goodness, of the fair being before her. Could no art avail to save her from the arms of death, already extended to grasp her? Was that high and intellectual brow, the throne of noble thoughts, soon to be laid in the grave; and those delicate cheeks and eloquent lips, to become food for the worms?

"Oh! why," thought Selina, "cannot the chosen of earth, like the beautiful flowers we cherish, droop and fall to the clay, whence they sprang, without all the fearful ceremony of the dark grave, the polluting worm, to consume the mortal coil that for a few brief years serves as an envelope to the spirit, doomed one day to ascend to a purer sphere? Ah! was it to correct and humble us, poor creatures as we are, that it was decreed that those dearest to us on earth, who made the charm, the blessing, of our lives, should no sooner resign their breath, than, in a short time, we are forced to consign them to the grave, to hide the ravages of decomposition, that proves (Oh how painfully to us!) 'what dust we dote on,' and yield the hungry worm its prey?"

Such were the gloomy reflections that filled the mind of Selina for a short time; but, as she listened to the aspirations of the fragile being before her, who spoke of that better world, to which she expected soon to be called, less gloomy thoughts passed into her mind. She felt that the decay of the body was but as the casting off the perishable part, as the chrysalis soars from the matter that had enveloped it and kept it from its higher destiny.

It was late ere Lady Almondbury permitted Selina to leave the boudoir. Indisposed to sleep, she poured out to the attentive ears of her delighted auditress the wisdom that is the fruit of graye reflection, on the instability and nothingness of

life, forced on her by the sense of her own frail tenure on existence. She felt that her days were numbered; that she must soon go hence, to be no more seen on earth; but her thoughts reverted to that other, better life, to which the grave is but the portal; and so cheering were her words, and so bright her hopes, that, in listening to them, Selina overcame that internal shudder, that dread of death, with which the young and healthy are prone to contemplate the awful change. They parted more affectionately than ever. Lady Almondbury saw that she had not over-rated the youthful governess of her daughter, when she had given her credit for as much virtue, and more prudence, than often fall to the lot of persons so young and inexperienced. Her desire to withdraw from a situation where she had, previously to Lord Almondbury's unpardonable attempt to ingratiate himself with her, been so happy, and the tact and delicacy with which she had avoided revealing his turpitude, had made a deep impression on the mind of his wife. Such was precisely the line of conduct she could approve, testifying, as it did, how readily the poor and dependent girl could sacrifice all the advantages enjoyed in her present home, rather than expose herself to the libertine designs of Lord Almondbury, or give uneasiness to his amiable and suffering wife.

When Selina entered her chamber, she found on her table a letter addressed to her in an unknown hand. The circumstance was so unusual a one, that for a moment she hesitated to open it: a presentiment that it contained nothing agreeable passed through her mind, and she was half-disposed to commit it to the flames; but, after a little reflection, and chiding herself for her weakness of nerves, she broke the seal, and, reading a few lines, found that the letter was from Lord Almondbury, and contained a repetition of the insulting proposals which he had presumed to address to her on that day.

"I am on the point of leaving England for a tour on the Continent," wrote the hardened *roué;* "and if you, my lovely Miss Stratford, will be the partner of my travels, you will render me at once the happiest and most grateful fellow on earth. I will make a settlement, before we go, that will secure you an ample provision for life, as also for any family that may come. At Paris you can engage a *femme de chambre*, and there, as elsewhere, you shall have an abode and equipage suitable

to your beauty and my station. Consider how humiliating and precarious is the position of a governess. In my family you may not have experienced the caprice and unkindness generally to be met with, but in how few can you expect to find so indulgent a patroness as in my wife? whose delicate health and weakness of nerves dispose her to seek companionship and show friendship, instead of maintaining the reserve and dignity peculiar to ladies in her position. I cannot believe that the disdain and indignation you so unmercifully manifested this day, when I avowed the passion you had excited in my breast, was serious. I looked on it as a clever piece of acting, which had two motives: the first, to enhance your merit in my eyes; and the second, to deceive the *espièglerie* of my daughter, who is, I must acknowledge, remarkably cunning for her age. Come, be honest, and confess I have guessed rightly. You felt certain that Lady Adelaide would tell her mother of our interview, and as certainly mention the displeasure it appeared to afford you, which would exonerate *you* from all blame, and leave censure or suspicion to fall wholly on my shoulders, which are sufficiently large to bear even a greater burden. The manœuvre was a clever one, and I admire the skill with which you carried it through; but, having frankly confessed this much, I must now tell you that there is no good to be obtained by continuing it.

"I cannot admire you more than I do, and am willing to prove it by the liberality of my settlement. Throw off the mask, and make me at once the happiest of men, by accepting my offer. You can feign the illness of some near relative, as an excuse for leaving. Go to Folkstone, where I will join you, and, free as air, and happy as love can make us, we will wing our way to France and Italy; and when we return, you shall find a house replete with every elegance and comfort ready for your reception. Two lines, to say what day you will be ready to start, left on my library table, will oblige your devoted, "A—."

Selina threw the odious letter from her with feelings of indignation, that brought the blood to her very temples. Was it, indeed, possible that her undisguised anger and disgust could have been mistaken by Lord Almondbury for the *ruse* and calculation of an unprincipled and shameless coquette? Tears,

bitter tears, of insulted virtue chased each other down her cheeks, and she felt as if degraded by remaining a single night under the roof of a man capable of such base conduct as Lord Almondbury had evinced towards her. Might he not, if, after this fresh insult, she continued in the house, misconstrue it into a tacit toleration of his dishonourable views, and postpone his departure for the Continent? Yet how was she, after her promise to Lady Almondbury of remaining with her for some weeks more, to announce or explain the change in her plans to that most amiable and suffering lady? Many were the tears shed that night before sleep deigned to visit her pillow, and well might she have exclaimed with the poet —

> "Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy Sleep;
> He, like the world, his ready visit pays
> Where Fortune smiles: the wretched he forsakes;
> Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,
> And lights on lids unsullied with a tear."

But poor Selina felt her painful position too profoundly to be able to apostrophize, even had she remembered the lines of Young. Her isolated and unprotected state, — an orphan, — without a single relative in the world on whom she had a claim, her only friends being the worthy Mr. Vernon and his wife, — how was she to relate to them the gross insult offered her by Lord Almondbury; yet this must be done, in order to account for her throwing up a situation which she had so frequently, in her letters to them, expressed her happiness and gratitude at having obtained. Blushes of shame dyed her cheeks at the very notion of this painful, humiliating, but unavoidable disclosure. To a pure-minded and virtuous woman there is nothing so mortifying, save the insult itself, as to have to communicate to others that she has been approached with disrespect, that dishonourable proposals have been addressed to her. Her very purity seems stained in her own eyes, by having to make such an avowal, and she trembles lest those to whom it must be made, should, even for a moment, imagine that aught approaching to levity on her part could have encouraged the gross affront.

But after having wept those bitter tears that flow from outraged feelings, and the consciousness of utter helplessness to avert such insults, back came the pleasing and re-assuring conviction, that the only two friends to whom it would be

necessary to give an explanation for leaving her present situation, were little likely to misjudge her, or form the slightest suspicion that the heartless libertine, who had dared to shock her ears by his odious offers, had ever seen anything in her conduct to justify so base a proceeding on his part. This reflection, and the confidence it inspired, soothed her feelings, and gratefully did she thank the Almighty for having given her friends, on the steadiness of whose esteem she could count in such an emergency, without a single doubt or fear of being misunderstood.

CHAPTER XIX.

At an early hour next morning a loud knocking at her door aroused Selina from slumber.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Stratford, come to my lady as soon as possible," said the maid appointed to wait on Lady Adelaide and her governess, "for her ladyship has burst a bloodvessel, and, I fear, is dying!"

Selina lost not a moment in making her hurried toilet, and ran to the chamber of Lady Almondbury, whom she found pale as marble, supported by pillows, and gasping for breath. A faint smile marked her recognition of Selina, to whom she extended her almost transparent hand; she attempted to speak, but the sanguine stream that rushed to her lips impeded her utterance, and proved the danger of the effort. She shook her head mournfully, and looked in Selina's face with an expression of such sweetness and resignation, as brought the tears to her eyes. The doctor, who had been sent for before Selina was summoned, now arrived. He felt the pulse of his patient, looked grave, and exhorted her not to attempt to speak. Lady Almondbury motioned to Selina to take a seat by her bedside, and the doctor having written a prescription, which was forthwith despatched to the apothecary's, he took his place at the opposite side of the bed.

"Is Lord Almondbury in town?" asked he, addressing the *femme de chambre*.

"Yes, Sir. His lordship is at home, but we have not called him, as his lordship came home very late."

A faint blush arose to the cheek of Lady Almondbury, who had heard the question and answer; but it soon receded, and

left her paler than before. Again the doctor felt her pulse, and while he held her hand a spasm passed over her face.

"My child," exclaimed Lady Almondbury, turning her eyes with a look of the most earnest appeal to Selina, and again the blood streamed from her lips.

"My dear Lady, you must not utter a word; indeed you must not," said the doctor, evidently very much alarmed.

"May I not bring Lady Adelaide?" demanded Selina, urged on by the appealing glances of the anxious mother.

"Yes, yes, bring the child," was the answer.

"My — husband," faltered Lady Almondbury.

"Send for his lordship directly," said the doctor.

"Dear, dear, Mamma!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide, breaking from her governess, and rushing to her dying mother; but the doctor held her back, and restrained her from throwing herself into the outstretched arms of Lady Almondbury.

"You must be gentle, young Lady; your mamma is too ill to bear the least exertion."

The child approached the bed with all possible gentleness, and seizing the hand of her mother, pressed it fondly to her lips, while the tears fell fast on it.

The doting mother gazed on her child with an expression of unutterable fondness, and tried to speak, but her lips were so tremulous from her deep emotion, that utterance was denied her. It was in truth a piteous sight, to behold that still young and lovely woman, conscious that she was gazing on her only child for the last time, with all a mother's prescience and tenderness throbbing in that heart that was soon to beat no more, yet unable to articulate the blessing she longed to bestow on her fair and youthful head.

Selina was melted to tears, which she turned away her head to conceal, and even the doctor, though accustomed to such heart-rending scenes, was moved.

Lord Almondbury now entered the room, attired in a splendid brocaded silk *robe de chambre* and trousers, and his feet encased in richly embroidered slippers. It was evident that he had arranged his hair, for it bore the marks of having been carefully combed and brushed, and his whole appearance testified the total absence of that disorder peculiar to a sudden summons from sleep. What a contrast did his gaudy undress and healthful face and person offer to the scene be-

fore him! There lay the shadowy form and emaciated though still beautiful face of her who had "loved him not wisely, but too well" — of her who had: in the pride of youth and beauty, when many noble suitors sought her hand, preferred him to all others, and yielded him her whole heart. There she lay, the victim of his inconstancy, neglect, and unkindness, hurried to a premature grave because her heart was not formed of firmer stuff to resist the wounds he had inflicted on it. He had entered the chamber with a step much less noiseless than the occasion warranted, for, having on a former night, some months before, been summoned to his wife, who, by her attendants, was believed to be dying, he concluded that the present was a similar false alarm, and, consequently, was not prepared for the truth. The dying woman recognised his step, turned her eyes on him with a mingled expression of pardon, pity, and love, such as angels might bestow on erring mortals, and, extending her hand, made a desperate effort to speak.

"Our child," faltered she, turning her glance on the weeping little girl, "promise me that you will love and cherish her for my sake who have loved you so well. Promise me, dear Henry, — it is my last request."

Stubborn as was the heart of him to whom it was addressed, this request, uttered by the faltering lips of his dying wife, deeply affected Lord Almondbury.

"You will still live, dearest," said he, and he pressed her extended hand to his lips.

The dying woman faintly shook her head, and again urged him to promise to love and cherish their child.

"I promise, faithfully promise, dearest!" replied he, and tears started to his eyes, the first that had visited them since his childhood.

"I had forgotten; there is another request I would urge," said Lady Almondbury. "I wished to secure a provision for Miss Stratford for her life. You will settle one hundred a-year on her, and present her with one of my watches as a memorial of my affection and esteem."

The exertion of speaking was too much for Lady Almondbury. Her head fell on her bosom, blood streamed anew from her lips, a slight convulsion passed over her face, and all was over.

"Frances! my own poor Frances!" exclaimed Lord Almondbury wildly, "she is not — she cannot be dead — she has only fainted; oh! doctor, give her quickly some restorative!" and sobs almost choked him.

"Alas! my Lord, it is all over. Let me lead you from this room. Your child requires all our care, for see, she has fainted."

Lord Almondbury flung himself on the bed in an agony of grief, the truth and intensity of which astonished all present, as much as it would have soothed her who had so lately breathed her last, could she have seen it; for with all a woman's fondness, she would have clung to the thought of being mourned by him, to whom she had given her virgin heart.

Selina, while tears chased each other down her pale face, assisted in removing Lady Adelaide to her own room, and the doctor having administered *sal volatile* and water to Lord Almondbury, led him to his. It was touching to witness the grief of the poor child when she was returned to consciousness. She could hardly be brought to believe that she was indeed motherless — that the eyes that had so lately gazed on her with such deep tenderness, were closed for ever — that the voice which had never addressed her but with fondness, she should never more hear. Poor girl! If those numbering ten times her years, cannot during the first hours of a bereavement like hers, bring themselves to believe the fearful truth, how little can it be wondered, that stunned by the overwhelming blow, her senses recoiled from it, and that refusing to credit the appalling fact, she entreated again and again to be permitted to return to the chamber of death, saying, "Only let me see my mother, touch her, speak to her, and convince myself that she is, as they say, dead, for I cannot, indeed I cannot, believe it!"

Tenderly did Selina Stratford watch over the impatient mourner, listen to her lamentations broken by sobs, and endeavour to soothe her, until, exhausted by the violence of her sorrow, the poor child fell into a profound slumber, and then she stole to the chamber of death, unwilling that the last rites due to the departed should be performed solely by menial hands. She found Mrs. Morgan, the faithful waiting-woman of poor Lady Almondbury, sitting in speechless grief by the bedside of her mistress, and aroused her from the

stupor in which she seemed plunged by offering her assistance for the sad duties required. "Ah, Miss Stratford, I thank you!" sobbed Mrs. Morgan. "You loved my dear lady, and your hands are worthy of touching her. I could not bear that those who never approached her person in life should —;" but here the tears of the poor woman impeded her utterance.

With trembling hands Selina fulfilled the melancholy task she had assigned herself. She closed the eyes of the departed, arranged her long and silken tresses, cutting off one for her child; and having gently placed the head on its pillow, was gratified to see the face, still beautiful in death, wear the calm and angelic expression that had characterized it when in life. Her labours — and they were labours of love — finished, she sank on her knees by the bed, and prayed long and fervently. Never in the house of God did she feel her soul lighted up to its Creator with more exalted piety, than while contemplating the tranquil loveliness of the face of the newly departed, which seemed already to bear the impress of that heaven to which, she hoped and trusted, the spirit had taken its flight. She prayed that the child left on earth might emulate the virtues of the mother, and like her meet death, filled with hope and confidence of mercy, through the Redeemer. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she looked on that calm, sweet face, — that marble brow, which pain or care could never more contract, — those closed lids, whence never more a tear could steal; and blamed her own selfishness, that could still desire to retain on earth, where only trials and sufferingsl awaited her, the pure spirit that had fled to its God.

She had taken her place by the couch of Lady Adelaide before she awoke, and watched over her with pitying tenderness. Never had she been so forcibly struck with the likeness between the child and her mother, as now; for the juvenile character, which the face of poor Lady Almondbury had assumed in death, rendered the resemblance more visible. But oh, how far less calm was the countenance of the sleeping girl! The brows were curved, traces of recent tears marked the cheeks, the lips occasionally trembled, and convulsive sobs heaved the chest. The word "mamma" was often murmured in that unquiet slumber, and in so plaintive a tone as to increase the sadness of her who watched so tenderly over the

sleeper. When Lady Adelaide awoke, and turned her eyes on Selina, a dreamy unconsciousness marked her countenance. She raised her hand to her forehead, as if to recall her memory, and then burst into a passionate fit of grief, saying "Mamma, mamma! Oh take me to mamma!"

Many were the kind words and affectionate embraces bestowed by Selina on her pupil, while the latter was being dressed by her maid; but the promise of being taken to see her dead mother had the greatest effect in soothing her. A message from Lord Almondbury, to desire the presence of his daughter, first recalled Selina to a consciousness of the awkwardness of her position in the house of a man who had presumed to address his libertine views to her, now that Lady Almondbury's death deprived her of the protection that lent a sanction to her residence there. She instantly wrote a letter to the excellent Mrs. Vernon, requesting her presence, being determined to be guided by her advice; and, rather than leave Lady Adelaide until the poor child was more reconciled to the bereavement so lately sustained, she would request Mrs. Vernon to remain with her until after the funeral.

When Lady Adelaide returned to her governess, Selina was pleased to find that she appeared less wretched than before her interview with her father. "Poor papa!" said the intelligent little girl, "he is so unhappy and cried so much, that I tried to comfort him. He took me in his arms and kissed me very often, and said I was like my dear blessed mother. I never thought papa could weep, did you, dear Miss Stratford?"

Glad was Selina to discover by the artless words of her pupil, that the heart of Lord Almondbury was touched by the death of his amiable and neglected wife, and sincerely did she pray that his late remorse and regret would not be of brief duration, being convinced that on the purifying effect of both on his heart, would his affection for his child find its surest basis; but her hopes of this desirable change in him were not very sanguine, as she dreaded that selfishness and habitual indulgence in libertine pursuits, had hardened his nature too much to permit repentance and grief to be more than temporary guests in his breast.

"I think I shall now be able to love papa," resumed the child. "Dear mamma often told me I must love him, but I never

thought I could till I saw him weeping for her. He showed me her picture; oh! such a beautiful face, Miss Stratford! not pale and sad, as I always saw her, but with a fresh pink colour on her cheeks, her eyes so bright that they look as if they had never shed a tear,—and such a sweet happy smile. I said so to papa, and then he cried afresh, and told me that when that picture was painted, dear mamma was as happy as she looked; and he muttered something about 'wretch, and ungrateful;' I didn't quite hear what it was, and he struck his hand against his forehead, and looked so miserable, that I kissed him, and said, 'Poor, dear papa,' and then he hugged me closely to his breast, and said it was just like what my angel mother would have done. Yes, dear Miss Stratford, he called my own mamma angel, and blessed, every time he spoke of her, and that made me love him very much. I wanted to have some one to kiss and love, as I used to kiss and love mamma. Not that I can ever love any one as I did her. O! no, Miss Stratford, that would be impossible. But let us go to her room."

It was, indeed, a piteous sight to behold the interesting child gazing on the dead, the tears flowing down her face, and awe restraining her from lavishing those caresses on the departed which she had been wont to do when her mother was in life.

"May I kiss her?" asked she in a whisper, as if fearful of awaking her, whose marble slumber the last trumpet could alone disturb. Selina having assented, she bent down and pressed the lips of her dead mother; but, no sooner had she become sensible of their rigidity and icy coldness, than she withdrew her own in terror, and, throwing herself into the arms of Selina, burst into a paroxysm of grief that it was long ere the soothing expressions of the latter could subdue.

Ah! who is it that has not, under similar circumstances, experienced the same shock? — A shock against which reason would in vain essay to guard us. We know that our bodies are but the temporary abodes of the immortal soul, which no sooner leaves them than these poor tenements of clay betray their native frailty, and retain only the faded likeness of the once-breathing structure; yet how difficult! nay, more, how impossible it is for us to divest ourselves of the love for that poor faded image that filled our hearts, when it

was animated by the vital spark! A love that draws our lips to those icy-cold ones, though their contact almost freezes the blood in our veins, and prompts us to address to those ears, sealed in death, the words of affection that were wont to delight them! How heart-breaking it is to look on that immoveable face, while our own is convulsed by the agony of grief, — its very calmness seeming like a mockery of our woe! If we, arrived at maturity, experience these conflicting emotions, can it be wondered at, that childhood should almost sink beneath them? Poor Lady Adelaide remained for a long time, with her face hid on the bosom of her governess, listening with breathless interest, while the latter explained to her, in terms suited to her tender years, the mysterious change from life to death.

"Then that is not really *my* mamma," said the child, pointing with her fingers to the dead, and an impression of awe on her countenance; "and yet, dear Miss Stratford, how like it is! It looks like an image of her in marble,—so white, so cold! Oh, I wish we could for ever keep it here, just as it now is! I would always say my morning and night prayers kneeling by it; and the sight of what was, yet is not, my own blessed mother, would prevent my again being obstinate or self-willed."

While the child was speaking, Lord Almondbury entered the chamber of death, but so softly, that neither Selina nor her pupil were sensible of his approach. He had over-heard Lady Adelaide's wish, and, touched by it, had determined it should be gratified. Selina arose and withdrew, Lord Almondbury having only noticed her presence by a bow; and his daughter took his hand and kissed it. Her pale face and tearful eyes increased her resemblance to her mother, and her father, glancing from the dead to the living, marked his recognition of the striking resemblance, by pressing his daughter to his breast, and he told her to go to her governess. Selina, who had remained in the adjoining room to take charge of Lady Adelaide, heard the door locked when her pupil had passed it; and, ere she had reached the study assigned to the use of the child, heard the sound of stifled sobs issue from the chamber of death.

With what altered feelings do we contemplate our own conduct towards those once dear to us, when they are no more, to the light in which we were accustomed to regard it

when they lived! How does every unkind look, word, or action, we may ever have directed to them rise up to reproach us, now that atonement is impossible! We forget all provocation, if provocation we ever had; every error or blemish of the departed is effaced from our memories; and in vain would we recall a single instance of their ever having existed, in order to justify our own sins of omission or commission towards the dead. We can only remember their good qualities; their affection, numberless proofs of which now occur, to fill our hearts with deep but too late remorse; and, as we bend in agony over their pale remains, we feel that we would give worlds, were they ours to bestow, to bring back to life those whose deaths, in the blindness of our hearts, we had dared to contemplate as events that might occur without inflicting the thousandth part of the anguish we now experience. The lapse of years seems forgotten. The indifference, or neglect, brought by time, or wrought by our own inconstancy; nay, even the faults that might have contributed to work such change, have all faded away. We remember only the days of happiness and undiminished affection; the days when the bare thought of losing the object would have been torture; and that torture is now ours, aggravated ten-fold by the reproaches of conscience, which tells us of our own unworthiness to possess the treasures we never before knew how to appreciate, and the loss of which we now vainly deplore. Oh! could we but value those dear to us, while yet Heaven vouchsafes to spare them to us, but half as dearly as we do when they are snatched from us for ever, what agonies of remorse might we not be saved! Could we but recall the past, and atone for any pain or wrong ever inflicted on the departed, what sacrifice would we not willingly, gladly offer up to accomplish it? — Our own part, blindness of heart, seems now, when viewed through the tears of remorse, not only a crime of deepest dye, but a folly, a madness, almost inconceivable! If even the good — those who have inflicted no injury, perpetrated no wrong, been guilty of no intentional act of unkindness — feel a remorse mingle with their regret for the loved dead, when they remember trivial instances of temper, caprice, or neglect, towards them, which, when they were in life, appeared but as trifles, unworthy a grave thought, what must be the pangs of those who are conscious of having embittered

the lives of the departed by unkindness, ingratitude, and wrongs? Bitter, indeed, must their feelings be! nor can time heal the wound inflicted by remorse; for the mournful dead will often appeal to memory in the silence of night, chasing sleep from the pillow, and peace from the heart!

Lord Almondbury for the first time of his life experienced the pangs of remorse, as he bent over the inanimate, but still lovely face of his departed wife. He recalled the blissful days that followed his marriage, when intoxicated by her beauty, and sweetness of temper, and vain of having secured a prize sought by many aspirants, he believed himself the happiest of mankind, and felt grateful to her who had preferred him. How fondly, how faithfully had she loved him; how uncomplainingly borne his neglect, his inconstancy, his unkindness! And there she lay, done to death by his conduct. Yes, the veil was torn from his eyes and he could no longer conceal from himself that disappointment of the heart had led to the destruction of her health, and finally to her premature death. How calm, how beautiful she looked, and how touching was the angelic expression of her face. He threw himself on the bed by her side; his tears fell in abundance over the snowy drapery that covered her cold remains, and he pressed his lips again and again on that marble brow. He implored her pardon, execrated himself for having sinned against Heaven and her, and poured forth his late remorse, his words broken by sobs and groans that vouched for the depth and truth of it. How many instances of her unchanging love, patient sweetness, and constant forbearance, under wrongs and neglect that must have aroused to anger and dislike any nature less perfect than hers, now occurred to his memory; *now*, when it was too late to make atonement for the wrongs she had endured. Yes, she had died unknowing the pangs her loss would inflict on him; her pure soul had fled to heaven, leaving him to drag on a miserable existence, poisoned by remorse and regret. For many hours he left not the chamber of death, and when at last he came forth from it, the waiting-woman of his deceased wife, who met him in the gallery, declared she never could have recognized his lordship, so great was the change wrought in his appearance by grief.

"Ah!" exclaimed she to Selina, "half the tenderness shown after death might save from dying."

CHAPTER XX.

A CELEBRATED sculptor was that day sent for by Lord Almondbury, to take a cast of the face, hands, and feet of the departed lady, for the purpose of having a recumbent statue of her executed for him. He remained present while the operation was performed, had the form so enveloped in drapery that its proportions could not be seen, and evinced as much care and tenderness while the plaster was laid on and removed, as if the dead could feel it; he with his own hand removing the traces of it, and smoothing the pencilled brows and pale forehead, with all the watchful tenderness of love. The jealous care with which he prevented the drapery that covered the breast, arms, and legs from being removed, made a deep impression on the sculptor, who was often afterwards heard to observe, that frequently as he had been employed on similar occasions, he had never seen such love and grief, as that witnessed in the case of Lord Almondbury. With his own hand he severed a long tress of her beautiful hair from her head, and when her cold remains were to be placed in their last receptacle to no other hands than his own would he confide the task. His grief, when the lid of the coffin was to be closed for ever, is not to be described. It was as though all the passionate love of the first days of his union with Lady Almondbury had revived in his heart to make him feel the pangs of this mortal separation more acutely. He accompanied the body to its last resting place, overpowered by grief, and when he heard the earth fall on the coffin, he fainted.

Lord Almondbury returned to his widowed home an altered man, and for some days was unable to leave his chamber.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Vernon, who had been summoned by Selina, had promptly repaired to Almondbury House, and having attentively listened to the statement of her young friend, came to the conclusion that the conduct of Lord Almondbury towards her previous to his wife's death, rendered her residence in his house ineligible.

"You must return to my humble abode, my dear Miss Stratford," said the excellent woman, "though I grieve you should be compelled to leave the dear child, who now, more

than ever, will stand in need of a judicious and affectionate monitress."

"I cannot bear to leave her to the care of servants," said Selina, "and if possible I would wish to stay with her until I can see her placed in proper hands. But how is this to be effected? I feel the impropriety of my remaining here, without the sanction of the presence of some female friend; but it looks so ungrateful to the dead, and so unkind to the dear Lady Adelaide, to leave the house during the first shock of the sad event that has just occurred, that I know not what to do."

"Make your mind easy on this point, my dear Miss Stratford, *I* will remain here with you, and will write a few lines to inform my husband of my intention, and the cause that has led to it."

"But good, kind Mr. Vernon, he will be so uncomfortable without you. It is not fair, indeed I feel it is not, to keep you from your home, when he will be so solitary and cheerless without you."

"Our servant is a steady and faithful woman, who knows his habits and tastes, she will see to his comforts, and with books, of which we have good store, he will get through his evenings very well; and he will be so glad to have you back with us, though sorry for the cause, that your presence will repay him for the temporary loss of mine."

Selina made known to the housekeeper that her friend would sojourn a few days with her, and requested that a bedroom which communicated with her own, might be prepared for her. Mrs. Middleton, a worthy and respectable woman, perfectly comprehended and approved of the prudence of the measure. She was, as indeed were all the servants of the establishment, but too well aware of the libertine habits of their lord and master, not to be fully sensible of the danger to which a young and handsome Governess would be exposed by being an inmate in his house, now that their loved and honoured lady was no more.

"Miss Stratford," said she, to their late lady's maid, "is a prudent, virtuous young woman, and her having that nice old gentlewoman to come here to keep her company, is a sure proof of it."

The first step Lord Almondbury took when able to attend

to business, was to order a splendid monument to be erected to the memory of his lamented wife, and the second was, to give instructions to his Solicitor to draw up a deed of annuity of a hundred guineas a-year for her life, to Miss Stratford. He felt that while fulfilling the requests of the departed, he was making the only atonement in his power to the dead, and he had a melancholy satisfaction in executing them to the letter. He now believed himself, what those around him gave him implicit credit for being, an altered man. His grief had been so strong, that it, for the time, banished every sinful desire, every libertine thought from his breast, and he imagined that, henceforth, he should never more be the slave of his passions, the sensualist he had been. Great then was his regret, when he received a note from Selina, announcing her intention of resigning her situation in his family, as soon as a successor could be obtained to take charge of Lady Adelaide.

"This comes from my own folly and wickedness," exclaimed he, as he let the note fall on the table near which he was seated, and pressed his hand to his forehead. "Madman, monster, that I was, when not even the presence of the angel I have lost, would prevent me from endeavouring to pollute her home, by attempting to corrupt the Governess of my child. Well may Miss Stratford dread remaining in my house after such atrocious conduct on my part. She knows not, she cannot know how I regret it, and would, in all probability, refuse credence to my assertions on the subject. That my daughter should be deprived of a monitress in whom her angelic mother placed such implicit confidence, and all through my folly, my worse than folly, my guilty views, is indeed a severe, though well-merited punishment. I will write to Miss Stratford, will acknowledge my sin, avow my regret, and pledge myself in the most solemn manner never again to incur her displeasure, if she will only remain with my daughter."

The letter was written and despatched, and the whole tenour of it gratified Selina, by giving her the hope, that the monster was indeed an altered man, and would henceforth respect whoever might fill her place in his family. One of the points which most increased her sorrow in parting from her pupil was, the dread that no governess worthy of having the

trust confided her, would remain in the house of Lord Almondbury, unless she happened to be too old to excite improper feelings in his breast, and to elderly governesses, she had heard Lady Almondbury say, he had an unconquerable objection. Her decision of withdrawing from his house, was not, however, to be changed, but while announcing this to his lordship in a cold but polite note, she carefully avoided all recurrence to the past, and simply stated that she could not hold a situation in a house where no lady of the family presided.

"I thought it would be so," said Lord Almondbury, as he laid the letter down. "When will the effects of my folly cease to pursue me. My poor Adelaide! how will this separation afflict her, so fondly attached too, as she is to Miss Stratford, who would have constantly kept alive in her breast the memory of her dear mother, and taught her to emulate the virtues and gentleness of that angelic being."

Lord Almondbury wrote to a maiden aunt of his, requesting her to engage a governess for his daughter, and the result was, a pressing invitation, by return of post from her, for him and Lady Adelaide to join her at her seat in Yorkshire, where she would take charge of her grandniece, until a suitable governess was provided.

The following day, Lord Almondbury inclosed Selina the deed of annuity, granted at the dying request of his wife, securing her one hundred guineas per annum for her life, accompanied by a watch that had belonged to the deceased lady, and a medallion in gold, containing a lock of her hair, and that of her child, with a hundred pound note as a remuneration for her services. A letter couched in the most respectful terms, in which he dwelt on the high esteem in which she had been held by his deceased wife, and expressed his regret at her leaving his family, was sent with the deed of annuity, watch, and medallion.

Selina showed her friend, Mrs. Vernon, the letter, deed, and gift.

"It strikes me that it would not be right for me to accept the annuity," said she; "I have not been sufficiently long in the house to have merited such a reward, and coming from one who insulted me, renders it much more repugnant to my feelings to accept it."

"I confess I do not see it in the same point of view, my dear Miss Stratford. This annuity was granted at the request of Lady Almondbury; used as such, is highly honourable to you. Had her ladyship bequeathed it by will, you could have no scruple in receiving it; why, therefore, not accept this gift, granted at her dying request, as a testamentary bequest? Remember, it did not originate with Lord Almondbury; although I dare say he, in his altered frame of mind, is glad of being furnished with an opportunity of atoning for his former improper conduct. I really think you would not be justified in refusing a gift which is the result of your own merit, and the high sense entertained of it by the deceased lady."

"But coming from *his* hands, spoils its value in my eyes. I may be proud, wilful, and ungrateful, dear Mrs. Vernon, but I really cannot bring myself to accept the annuity."

"Do not at least decide, until you have consulted my husband. He will give you the best advice."

"Were it simply a matter of prudence, I would willingly defer to his judgment, and be guided by it; but this is an affair of feeling, and I must be guided by my own sense of right. I have no sentiment of anger against Lord Almondbury, but to receive an annuity from one who twice insulted me by proposals of the basest nature, I cannot consent to do."

Mrs. Vernon forbore to interfere any further; and though thinking that Selina pushed her scrupulous delicacy further than was necessary, she admired the disinterestedness and self-respect that influenced her decision, and only regretted that it was not in her, or her husband's power to secure independence to one so every way worthy of it. The return of the deed of annuity to Lord Almondbury gave him real pain. He felt that it was his former conduct that had led to the rejection of the gift, and this proof of the delicacy and self-respect of Selina, increased his regret that his daughter should be deprived of one so every way capable of instilling high principle and pure morals into her mind.

In ten days after, Lord Almondbury conducted Lady Adelaide to the country. The parting between that sensitive and affectionate child and her governess cost both many tears; and painful was it to Selina to listen to the reiterated pleadings of her pupil to her dear Miss Stratford, not to leave her.

"I will be so obedient, so good, if you will stay with me," sobbed the weeping girl. "It is so hard to lose my dear blessed mamma, and then for you, too, to leave me."

Lord Almondbury wrote a second letter to Selina, intreating her by the affection she had entertained for the departed, not to reject the gift dictated by her dying breath, but nothing could change her decision; and the evening of the day that Lord Almondbury and his daughter left London, Selina and her kind friend Mrs. Vernon, returned to the home of the latter, where a most cordial welcome awaited them from Mr. Vernon.

"I cannot," said that worthy man, when his wife told him of Selina's rejection of the annuity, "blame Miss Stratford for her high-minded and disinterested conduct; although I could wish that the gift had been a bequest formally made by will, by her late amiable patroness, as in that form she could have accepted it without any scruple; but the conduct of Lord Almondbury must have rendered it humiliating and painful to receive a gift coming through his hands, and, therefore, I can well understand her feelings in refusing it."

The death of Lady Almondbury and the separation from her child, made so deep an impression on Selina, that it required all the kindness of her worthy host and hostess, to conquer the melancholy produced on her mind by these events. In a few days after her instalment in her peaceful abode, she read in a newspaper the departure of Lord Almondbury for the continent, and she wrote a few lines to the *femme de chambre* of the late Lady Almondbury, who now was appointed confidential attendant to her daughter, to enquire after the health of Lady Adelaide. It gave her pleasure to hear, by return of post, that her late pupil was in good health, and gradually recovering her spirits, under the care of her indulgent grand-aunt, with whom she was to remain until Lord Almondbury's return from the continent, which was not expected to be for some months.

And now Selina again turned her thoughts to seeking a situation in some other family; she read over the advertisements for governesses, in which more accomplishments are required than can fall to the lot of mortal, and more virtues expected than poor human nature is heir to, and all for salaries little exceeding the wages bestowed on menials, without

the reversionary left-off clothes they inherit. One advertisement, more reasonable in the requisites insisted upon, attracted her attention, and she answered it. In due time an appointment was made, and, accompanied by her kind friend Mrs. Vernon, she went to the place named. No sooner had she entered the sitting-room of a house in Brook-street, in which two ladies were seated, both having a certain asperity of countenance, joined to a striking resemblance of feature, that indicated a near relationship, than, having glanced at her, one of them observed in Italian, that her face was disagreeably associated in her mind, although she could not, at the moment, recollect where she had seen it. The other lady examined the countenance of Selina very much as a police magistrate may be supposed to do that of a criminal brought before him on some serious charge; but neither of the ladies motioned her to a seat, so she and Mrs. Vernon stood in painful embarrassment, near the door so lately entered.

"Where have you last lived?" demanded one of the ladies in a stern tone of voice, that did not tend to encourage the timid girl, to whom the interrogation was addressed.

"With the late Lady Almondbury."

"Ah! yes; now I recollect," exclaimed the lady who had spoken in Italian, still using that language, "this is the very person we saw walking with that odious *roué*, Lord Almondbury, one morning in Kensington Gardens."

The lady to whom this remark was addressed, glanced at Selina with increased asperity, and asked why she had left Lord Almondbury's family.

"I left on the death of Lady Almondbury," was the reply; "not wishing to continue."

"I should not have expected you to be so very scrupulous," observed the other lady; "for, if I mistake not, I saw you walking with his lordship some time ago, in Kensington Gardens."

This speech was uttered with so severe and contemptuous an air, as to bring blushes to the cheeks and brows of her to whom it was addressed, which being noticed, both ladies exchanged triumphant glances.

"Yes, Madam, it is true, Lord Almondbury did one day join his daughter, Lady Adelaide, when I was walking with her in Kensington Gardens —"

"I will not trouble you any further; you would not at all suit me," rudely interrupted the lady; "but I beg to offer you one piece of advice, which is — to avoid, in whatever place you may enter, permitting gentlemen to walk with you."

There was something so insulting in the tone and manner in which this counsel was given, that Selina could not cheat herself into the belief that it was kindly meant, however convinced of its prudence. She, however, checked every symptom of the indignation she could not wholly vanquish, and explained how entirely against her wish it had been that Lord Almondbury had joined her pupil and herself. But she spoke to those determined on disbelieving her assertions; for, giving her scarcely time to conclude her attempt to exculpate herself, she was told that her past, present, or future conduct was totally uninteresting to the speaker, and that she might withdraw.

Mrs. Vernon, who saw the malignity of this spiteful person, and felt anxious that Selina should not depart without removing, if, possible, the evil impression evidently made on her mind, ventured to address her.

"As the friend of Miss Stratford I must state that she told me of the annoyance Lord Almondbury's presence, with her pupil and herself, inflicted on her, on the sole occasion on which he joined them. You will therefore, I trust, Madam, acquit her of any participation in that occurrence. Her refusing the liberal offer made to her to continue in the family after the death of the late amiable and excellent Lady Almondbury, is her best vindication."

"I am not conscious of professing any charge against the young person," said the sternest looking of the ladies; "and being particularly occupied just now, I have really no time to devote to the affairs of total strangers." And she coldly nodded her head, and rang the bell, leaving Selina, and her discomfitted friend, no choice but to retire, hurt and grieved by the conviction that the two ladies, whom it had pleased fortune to bring them in contact with, entertained the most erroneous opinion of Selina, and would, in all probability, not scruple to express it to others when an occasion might offer.

Tears rushed to the eyes of Selina the moment the door of the house in Brook-street closed after her. Indignation and pride restrained them while in the presence of the two stern

and ill-natured women who caused them to flow; but now they were no longer present to witness the pain they had inflicted, she could not repress her tears, although Mrs. Vernon used all her endeavours to soothe her wounded feelings. "To know that there are persons who believe me guilty of encouraging the attentions of a married man, of being an unprincipled hypocrite, and of dishonouring the roof beneath which I was received as an instructress to the child of my dear, honoured Lady Almondbury. Oh! it is too, too cruel!" and the tears and sobs of Selina, as she lent her head on the shoulder of her kind companion, in the carriage into which they entered on leaving Brook-street, would have melted a sterner heart than belonged to the excellent Mrs. Vernon.

CHAPTER XXI.

With what intense dismay does a young and sensitive woman find herself suspected of conduct, from the bare notion of which she would shrink with horror and dread. Nor can the consciousness of her own innocence and purity console her under such a trial. She would fain have all, with whom she may chance to come in contact, believe in that virtue, on which even a doubt inflicts a wound not easily to be healed; and to bear, however unmerited, the suspicion of guilt, is torture.

"Good heavens!" thought Selina, "is there, then, no safety for the youthful and unprotected? Can the wilful, bad conduct of a man, over whom I could exercise no control, entail on me such direful consequences. They (referring to the ladies in Brook-street) not only scrupled not to insinuate a belief in my culpability, but refused to listen to aught in the shape of my justification; and yet what could I have urged? I could but have told the simple truth; but how little would that have availed with them. The bare acknowledgment that Lord Almondbury had addressed his libertine views to me, had presumed to insult my ears by his base proposals, would have led them to think that never would he have so dared, had not some levity on my part given him encouragement. How did I shrink from making the distressing avowal to my kind friend, Mrs. Vernon, though certain of her predisposition to judge favourably of me."

Such were the reflections that occupied the mind of Selina, as she was driven through the streets, her waist encircled by the arm of her kind friend, who truly sympathized in her sorrow, and who uttered all that could alleviate her distress. "Those who could judge so harshly and unjustly, my dear Miss Stratford, must be ungenerous, and predisposed to evil. You must not allow their malice to make you unhappy. You will never again, in all human probability, encounter these persons; and pray think no more of them," said the worthy woman. But the advice was more easily to be given than followed. Selina for many days could think of nothing else than that two women existed, of whom, until the hour she entered their house, she knew nothing, whom she never could have offended, yet who entertained towards her sentiments of a hostile nature, founded on a belief in conduct, on her part, which she would die rather than have merited.

How strange are the occurrences in life! A few hours before, had any one told her that, ere night, she should shed bitter tears, caused by persons she had never then seen, she would have disbelieved the possibility; yet here she now was, bowed down by indignation and wounded delicacy, at a charge rather hinted, than openly made, by total strangers, to whom she should never have an opportunity of vindicating her innocence. Proud as Selina naturally was, she would have submitted to almost any humiliation to exonerate her character, so highly did she estimate the blessing of an unspotted and unsuspected reputation.

When Mr. Vernon returned home in the evening, and noticed the traces of tears on the fair young face he had seen so blooming in the morning, his wife told him of the cause. "Poor dear young creature!" said the worthy man. "Were the ladies plain?"

"Yes; but what had that to do with their harshness?" replied his wife.

"More, much more, than you imagine, my dear. Ugly women, unless blessed with a greater share of goodness than generally falls to the share of most in that perdicament, are prone to judge severely of those who possess youth and beauty, two advantages which are always the objects of their envy. *They wished* to think ill of Miss Stratford, merely because she

is young and handsome; had she been ill-favoured they would have judged her less uncharitably."

"And can such hardness of heart be?" demanded Mrs. Vernon. "Jealousy and envy ever act on the heart as petrifying waters do on other substances."

"They harden it for ever," was the reply.

Although rendered more timid than before, and painfully nervous at the thought of again presenting herself to strangers as a candidate to fill the place of governess, Selina felt that she must not eat the bread of idleness, or remain a tax on the hospitality of her kind friends. She carefully read over the long columns of advertisements in the "Times," in search of some one that might hold out a prospect of suiting her; but for some days this search was unsuccessful. There is something in an advertisement, a physiognomy, if I may be allowed so to express it, which, as the human countenance unveils the character of its owner, betrays that of the writer. From how many of those columns, filled up by specifications required, and headed by the word "*Wanted*," in large capitals, did Selina turn away disappointed and dispirited. One of the writers was, she felt certain, proud and austere; another, vulgar; a third mean and sordid; and all, more or less, exacting. She blamed her own over fastidiousness; repeated to herself that it was not for her to expect to meet again such a patroness as the one of which death had robbed her, and that she must not give way to the nervous dread she felt growing in her mind, but without loss of time, seek a situation. Once more she took up the newspaper, and selecting one of the advertisements that struck her as being the least objectionable, that is, in which least accomplishments and perfections were required, and salary not mentioned, and addressed a letter to the initials and street named. This step taken, her thoughts reverted to the past, and thence came back to the present and future. What sort of family might this be into which she had offered to enter? How painful to seek a home with utter strangers, whose manners and minds might be so totally dissimilar to her own, that a daily contact with them might be anything but agreeable. Yet such must ever be the lot of a governess, who is expected to bestow not only her accomplishments, and the fruits of her education on those she is paid for instructing, but also to mould her manners, if

not her sentiments, to suit those of the parents whose hardly-earned bread she is to eat, and whose sordid remuneration of her services, she is expected to be thankful for. The more she reflected on this subject, the less courage did she feel for a new trial, and yet it must be made. She must meet cold looks, answer stern questions, and submit to be treated rather as a criminal before her judge, than a well-educated and stainless woman, seeking a maintenance by the exercise of her abilities in an honourable calling.

Again she went forth; but this time she directed her steps to no aristocratic street. The answer to her note appointed her to call at ten o'clock the following day at No. — Allsop Terrace, New Road. A boy about eleven or twelve years old, opened the door, and having inquired whether she was the person come after "the governess's place," gave her ingress. Clothed in a faded suit of green cloth made in the form of a close vest and trousers, the jacket ornamented with three rows of brass sugar-loaf buttons, which had long lost their lustre, this boy, designed by his employers to represent that appendage of an expensive establishment, denominated a page, was, in reality, the only male domestic in the house. His whole appearance bore evidence to this fact; for his face looked as if water seldom came in contact with it; his hair was in a disorder more calculated for picturesque effect, than tidiness or good order; his black neckcloth had grown into a reddish brown, and his boots were pierced in various places. An extreme obliquity of vision, increased the natural ugliness of this youth, and a sharpness of manner amounting to impertinence, testified that good breeding was not much attended to in the house in which he fulfilled the multifarious duties of porter, butler, footman and errand-boy.

"Missis is up stairs, and if you follow me I'll show you the way to her," said the youth of all-work, rapidly mounting the stairs at the other side of the hall. He ascended so nimbly, that Selina found it impossible to keep pace with him, though she toiled up the narrow and steep stairs as quickly as she could, as her panting breath testified.

"Come along Miss, come along," said the elfin page, "Missis can't abide slow people;" and before Selina had reached the landing-place, he threw open the door of a room which opened on it, and elevating his voice, exclaimed —

"If you please Ma'am, here be the person as is comed after the governess's place."

"Why doesn't she come in?" said a gruff and most disagreeable voice, in return.

"She han't got up the stairs yet," was the reply.

"Then why keep the door open, you fool? except to give me my death by cold."

The boy muttered an unintelligible reply, and Selina entered the dining-room — seated by a table covered with various pieces of linen, divers pairs of stockings, some children's frocks, and muslin habit-shirts, forming altogether a heterogeneous and formidable heap of litter, was a woman about forty years of age, whose dress denoted that little care had been devoted to it. This personage had once been a blonde, with pretensions to beauty, and the flaxen hair which fell in long ringlets over the cheeks, were down to her large bust, rendered the complexion peculiar to very fair women, when arrived at a certain age, still more remarkable. A red circle occupied the place of eyebrows, while the scanty eyelashes, "few and far between," were nearly white, and lent a very disagreeable expression to the light grey eyes beneath them which peered with almost feline slyness on the face of Selina. "You are Y. Z., I suppose?" said the mistress of the house, "and I am F. G. Sit down, for I have many questions to ask, and they will take some time to be answered, for one can't be too cautious now-a-days, when so many impostors are going about, who one lets enter one's house. Who is this person?" enquired the speaker, rudely pointing to Mrs. Vernon.

"The friend with whom I reside, Madam."

"You had better sit down also," said F. G., for the real name of the lady had not yet been revealed, and she nodded to a chair, placed with a row of others formally against the wall of the room.

"You undertake to teach French, Italian, German, and all other languages, I suppose," demanded F. G.

"No, Madam, not German," was the reply.

"And why not pray? you might as well have learnt that, when you were learning other languages."

No reply being made to this observation, the lady again

resumed her category. "You can draw, and paint, of course, and do every kind of needle-work?"

"I draw tolerably," was the modest answer.

"But can't you paint in oil? that I consider indispensable, for I want do have pictures for my room. I like pictures, and those you will paint while teaching my daughters, could be hung up, for as I will have to pay for the canvass, colours, and for your time, I will naturally expect that the pictures are to be mine."

"I am sorry that I do not paint in oil."

"Well, for a governess setting up to teach every thing, I think it 's very strange that you shouldn't be able to paint in oil, or to teach German. This must of course make a considerable difference in your salary. I hope you perfectly understand plain work, and can do it quickly, for I expect all the children's clothes to be kept in repair, as well as made by their governess, as also that she will lend a hand to mending the house linen, and altering my dresses."

Mrs. Vernon looked at Selina in a mode to imply her desire, that her young friend should at once decline the situation, where so much was required, and so little comfort could be expected, but prepared to find objections present themselves in every family where she might offer her services, and anxious not to continue to be a burden on the kind friends she was staying with, Selina determined, if possible, to close with the terms of F. G., and by patience and zeal in fulfilling the duties of her office, render it at least supportable.

"What salary do you expect?" enquired F. G.

"Sixty guineas a-year, Madam."

"Sixty guineas a-year!" reiterated the mistress of the house, letting her work drop into her lap, and raising her hands to mark her astonishment at so enormous a sum being expected. "Well, I never heard of such a salary being asked, and that too, by a person who acknowledges that she doesn't know German, and can't paint in oils. Fifty pounds a-year; *mind*, pounds, *not* guineas, is the utmost I intend to give, even to a person who will undertake to teach German and painting in oil, two indispensable requisites in my opinion, in the education of young ladies. If you are disposed to accept forty pounds a-year, I deduct ten on account of your not

knowing German and oil-painting, I have no objection to your entering my family."

Again Mrs. Vernon looked at Selina, and expressed, as strongly as looks could do, her desire that she should decline the situation; but her young friend, to her surprise and regret, accepted it, and it was agreed that she should enter on her new duties the following week.

"And now," said the lady, who had announced that her name was Mrs. Jefferson, "to whom am I to refer for your abilities and character?"

"I have a strong recommendation from the only situation I ever held, and which I left in consequence of the death of the lady."

"But her children, your pupils, didn't also die, I suppose," observed Mrs. Jefferson sharply. "Why didn't you continue with them?"

"I declined doing so, Madam, because I did not wish to live in a house where no lady presided."

"You acted very properly. And so the recommendation you have is from the gentleman, the widower?"

"Yes, Madam."

"I would prefer a recommendation from a lady."

"I can answer for the morals, and conduct of Miss Stratford, Madam," said Mrs. Vernon.

"What relation are you to her, pray?"

"None whatever, Madam, but I know her well, and can conscientiously recommend her."

"But as you are a perfect stranger to me, you cannot be surprised if I ask you for a reference."

"The clergyman of the parish in which I have resided thirty-five years, will, I am sure, Madam, satisfy you with regard to my respectability; and if you permit me, I will write his address on my card."

"Yes, that will do very well, you'll find pen and ink on that table;" and Mrs. Jefferson pointed to a table near the window, which Mrs. Vernon approached, and wrote the address on.

"Be sure to be here early on Monday morning, Miss — what did you say your name is?"

"Stratford, Madam."

"Stratford! any relation to the family of that name, in Norfolk?"

"No, Madam."

"I thought not, and I'm glad of it; for they are a proud, haughty set. You may go now; but remember Monday morning. I like punctuality, and expect to find it in every one in my establishment;" and, nodding her head, she motioned to the door, as a signal for the departure of her visitors, who took their leave.

"How could you, my dear Miss Stratford, engage with a woman whose appearance and manners offer so little promise of comfort in her house, and on terms, too, so very disadvantageous?" asked Mrs. Vernon, almost in a reproachful tone.

"I must confess that the abode does not seem very tempting," replied Selina; "but still it is less disagreeable to me to close at once even with this engagement, unpromising as it is, than have to go to other houses, and be subjected to the annoyances always attending such occasions."

The inquiries of Mrs. Jefferson having been satisfactorily answered by the clergyman, to whom they were addressed, Selina, on the appointed day, much to the regret of her kind host and hostess, bade farewell to them, and proceeded to her new abode.

"Remember, my dear Miss Stratford," said both husband and wife, "that should our fears, as to the comfort of the situation you have accepted, be realized, you have always a home here to which you will ever be cordially welcomed, and where your presence will ever diffuse joy."

These proofs of a friendship so valuable, were most soothing to the feelings of her to whom they were offered, and armed her with courage to support whatever annoyances she might have to encounter in the family she was about to enter.

"You are later than I expected," were the first words addressed to her by Mrs. Jefferson on her arrival. "As you are so late, you have, of course, had your luncheon; so, while we are eating ours, you can go and arrange your things in your room. Thomas, Thomas, why don't you answer when you are called?"

"Vy, Ma'am, I vas a getting the luncheon, and I can't be in two places at vunce."

"Haven't I told you a dozen times that you must not make answers. Its very vulgar."

"Then, vat's I to do ven you axes me questions, Ma'am?"

"There, go along, you stupid lout; and send Kitty to show Miss Stratford her room, and you must help her up with her luggage."

Thomas stopped at the top of the kitchen-stairs, and screamed as loud as he could for Kitty, who, after a few calls, was heard ascending from the lower regions, muttering her dissatisfaction *soto voce.*

"One never can have a moment's quiet, nor a meal in peace," muttered Kitty. "I wish I was back in my last place, I am sure. *That was* something like a place, where there was a reg'lar footman kept, as well as a teaboy."

"Missis says you are to show the new governess to her room, and that I am to help you to carry up her traps."

"How am I to help to carry up such a big trunk as that there, I should like to know? why it would strain my back. I think people might have some conscience and pity for poor servants, instead of having trunks that would take a couple of porters to move about," observed Kitty, glancing angrily at Selina, who, slipping a shilling into her hand, and another into that of the boy, soon vanquished the objections of both to perform the service she required, and rendered them very civil.

"Sure, Thomas, it 's nothing after all," said Kitty, lifting the trunk with perfect ease. "Follow me, Miss, if you please; take care of the turn, for the stairs are mighty narrow at the corner."

On the third floor, Kitty and the boy entered a small room, so utterly destitute of all comfort, that Selina, whose expectations were very moderate, drew back involuntarily, as she cast her eyes over the wretched room.

"You may well stare, Miss," said Kitty; "for this is no fit room for a genteel young lady like you. It was very well for the last governess, who was no more a lady than I am, and who never showed us the colour of her money while she was in the house; but for you, Miss, who have behaved so genteel, I'm quite ashamed to put you into such a hole."

"Von't you have a bit of summat to eat, Miss?" asked Thomas.

"Do, Miss," added Kitty, "I advise you; for if Missis *can* cheat you out of your reg'lar meals she *will*, I can assure you. I know she half-starved the governess that was here last."

"Thomas, Thomas, — Kitty, Kitty, what are you about?" screamed Mrs. Jefferson.

"Coming, Ma'am, — coming," answered both servants, as they rapidly retreated from the chamber of Selina, and descended the stairs.

Selina glanced around the miserable chamber assigned to her, with a shudder of disgust she could not conquer. So low, that she could hardly stand upright in it, and only lighted by one small window, nothing could be more dreary and dingy than the aspect of this room. The paper hung from the humid wall in several places, and so defaced was the pattern and colours by damp, that it would be difficult to guess the original design or hue. The small window had no curtain, and in that point perfectly corresponded with the bed, which, with its soiled counterpane, scarcely covering the still more soiled blankets and matresses, offered anything but a tempting place of repose. A broken mirror, of small dimensions, stood on a deal table, and a cracked jug and basin filled a ricketty wash-hand-stand. Such was the dormitory assigned to the governess, — a chamber that would, in most respectable families, be considered too bad for a servant holding one of the lowest situations in the kitchen. It boded little of good to its new occupant, who determined, however, to make the best of it, immediately set about arranging her clothes and books, — no easy task, a very small wooden chest of drawers on three legs, being the only piece of furniture in the room to receive them. In about an hour she was summoned to the presence of Mrs. Jefferson, who, with two very plain girls of nine and eight years old, she presented to Miss Stratford as her pupils. They had very red hair, and one squinted exceedingly; a misfortune, as their mother stated, to be attributed solely to Julia's imitating that infirmity in Thomas, the page.

"Matilda you will find a very docile pupil," said Mrs. Jefferson. "Indeed she is, if anything, too quiet, while Julia is extremely lively. This is the school-room."

An apartment little larger than a closet, lighted by a window in the roof, and heated by a small stove, which

the discoloured paper on the walls proved to smoke, was the wretched den where Selina and her pupils were to pass the days.

"You will dine with me when I have no company," said Mrs. Jefferson, assuming a dignified air, "and when I have, you will be expected to play and sing to amuse the party."

While the mother was speaking, both the little girls were closely examining the countenance of their new governess. The elder one with a stupid stare of wonder, and the younger with a cool effrontery, with which no inconsiderable portion of slyness and cunning were mingled.

"Look, Mamma," exclaimed she, "what a pretty gown Miss Stratford has, and what a nice collar and cuffs; why she is much smarter than you are, Mamma."

"Hold your tongue, child! Have I not told you that you are not to make personal remarks?"

"But you said at lunch that she was much too smartly dressed, and that her gown was better than yours."

Mrs. Jefferson's face flushed with anger, and she again told Miss Julia to be silent, adding a denial of the child's assertion. This, however, was not the mode to silence the young lady, who, anxious to establish her own veracity, pertinaciously adhered to her statement, adding,

"Yes, Mamma, you *did* say Miss Stratford's gown was better than yours, and also, that governesses had no business to be better dressed than ladies."

"You really are incorrigible, and merit a good box on the ear, you little tiresome thing," said Mrs. Jefferson, now crimson with rage; Miss Julia, nothing daunted, was on the point of again vindicating her own veracity, when Selina interposed, and told her to be silent.

"What, when Mamma tells stories, and denies what she said? Matilda heard her as well as I did; didn't you, Matilda?"

Matilda looked more stupid than before, and after a moment's pause, observed that she never remembered any thing that was said.

"That's because you are a stupid fool, as Mamma often says," replied the spoilt Julia.

"Every one calls me stupid," said Matilda, "but I can't help it," and here the poor girl burst into tears.

"See, you naughty girl, how you have made your poor sister cry. You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Mrs. Jefferson.

"I only repeated what you continually say," replied Julia, addressing herself to her mother, who dreading a continuation of her impertinence, left the room, recommending before she closed the door, that Miss Stratford should severely correct her for insubordination.

To the grave lecture pronounced by Selina, her hopeful pupil listened with little more deference than she had evinced towards the reproofs of her mother. She attempted several times to interrupt the discourse of her governess by rude observations, and by her waywardness and obstinacy convinced her teacher, that to subdue so wilful a temper, and reduce her to obedience, would be indeed no easy task. While the grave reproof was being given, Miss Jefferson sat with a vacant stare, that indicated how little she comprehended its import, and when at last appealed to by Selina, whether she did not think her younger sister's conduct very blameable? she replied,

"I don't know, Miss. I didn't know it was wrong of Julia to repeat what Mamma said. Our governess who went away said we must never tell a lie, and yet Mamma and you are very angry that sister spoke the truth. I'm sure I don't know who is right, nor who is wrong, do I Julia?"

"No, to be sure you don't poor Matty. How should you. You know every one says you are a fool."

"Hi, hi, hi," sobbed Matilda, "Julia is always calling me a fool, and I don't like being called a fool, hi, hi, hi, and I *won't* be called a fool, that I won't."

"Miss Julia, it is highly improper of you to speak so rudely to your sister. I won't permit it," observed Selina gravely.

"But she *is* a fool," retorted the incorrigible Julia, "and as I only said the truth, I think you are very cross and ill-natured to scold me."

"Where are your books, young ladies?" inquired Selina.

"They are all torn to pieces," replied Matilda, "I saw Julia tear them up yesterday."

"You helped me Matty, you know you did."

"Because you said I must tear them with you, and then we should have no more lessons to learn."

"Then I must inform your mother, young ladies," and Selina left the room to acquaint Mrs. Jefferson of the fact revealed by that lady's eldest daughter. This new proof of the bad conduct of her children produced great anger on the part of the mother, who far from attributing their errors to their true source, namely, her own improper indulgence to the younger, proclaimed herself to be the most unfortunate parent in the world to have such troublesome, ill-behaved girls. Having pronounced strong censure on them, mingled with many laudations on her own goodness, she inquired if Miss Stratford had not any books that might replace those destroyed the previous day. Being told she had not, Mrs. Jefferson said, "Well, then, put down on paper the books you require, but let them be as few as possible, and to-morrow I will go out to a book stall, and see if I can't buy some cheap: and in the mean time, that you should not be idle, here's some linen to mend, and while you are at work, you can scold the children, which will do them good. Always utilise your time as I do, for while I work, my eyes and fingers only being employed, I can use my tongue, and always take that opportunity to scold the children and servants."

CHAPTER XXII.

UNWILLING that her pupils should pass the day in idleness, Selina proposed giving them some needle-work, but found that great an adept as was their mother in this homely but useful art, they were wholly ignorant of even the most simple part of it, and nay, more, evinced a positive disinclination to learn it, they commenced whispering and laughing together; Miss Julia making it evident by her repeated glances at her governess, that *she* furnished the subject of her mirth, and when told to be silent, stoutly defended her right to speak. Selina looked around for a book, in order to employ her wayward pupil in reading aloud, but none was to be found; and when adopting their mother's advice to correct them, she firmly but calmly reproved them for their rudeness, Miss Julia commenced making the most fearful grimaces at her, which set Miss Jefferson into screams of laughter. Heavily and

gloomily passed that long day. It seemed interminable to the poor governess; but at length she was summoned to dinner, and the maid-servant who gave her the intimation that the repast was served in the dining-room, acquainted her that she was expected to smoothe the young ladies' hair, wash their faces and hands, and see that they were tidy.

"But mind Miss, if you please, you mustn't keep Missis waiting for a moment, for she's mighty pertiklar about having people ready for dinner, and makes sich an ado about it, that it's quite vexing to hear how she'll go on sometimes."

Selina, greatly flurried by this intelligence, endeavoured to make her pupils a little more presentable for the dining-room, to which operation on her part, they were strongly opposed, and offered such resistance, that fifteen minutes were occupied in what might have been accomplished in half that time, and having merely snatched a moment to wash her own hands, she hurried to the dining-room.

"This will never do, I can assure you," said Mrs. Jefferson, her mouth so filled with food that her utterance was nearly impeded, and her face extremely flushed. Mr. Jefferson, for so Selina concluded the gentleman at the bottom of the table to be, betrayed no symptom of recognizing her presence, except by raising his eyes from his plate, and staring rudely at her, while he continued to eat his dinner with an appetite that a *gourmand* might envy, however he might despise the coarse fare that satisfied it. A soiled table cloth, bearing sundry proofs of the partiality of its owners to mustard, and of their carelessness in helping gravy, was covered by delf plates and dishes of the commonest kind. At the top of the table was a dish of very greasy looking hash, in which onions formed a component part, and at the bottom was a boiled breast of mutton so covered with fat as to vouch for the skill in feeding of the seller. A dish of mashed turnips of so dark a hue as to leave no doubt that the place of milk had been supplied by water in their culinary preparation, was flanked by a dish of potatoes on which steam had done its worst, leaving only certain crushed and clammy substances adhering to the dish, whence it was no easy task to remove them.

"Cut some mutton for the children," said Mrs. Jefferson to her *caro sposo*. "You need not give them much, for they ate a good luncheon."

"I had only some cold pork, and it was so nasty I couldn't eat it," observed Miss Julia, putting up her lip, and pouting.

"And I had only a potatoe," said Miss Jefferson, with a very doleful expression of countenance.

"No one wants to know what you have had," replied the affectionate father, gruffly; "but I know by my butcher's bills that a little does not satisfy you."

"I want some hash, I can't eat that nasty fat mutton," whined Miss Julia.

"Then go without," was the rejoinder of her papa.

"Give Miss Stratford some mutton," said Mrs. Jefferson, helping herself at the same time to a large supply of the hash, which whether by accident or design, she never offered Selina, who thoroughly disgusted with the appearance of the whole dinner, was strongly tempted to decline accepting the offered slice of fat mutton. She feared, however, that if she did so, she might give offence, and be accused of being over dainty; so she tried to find some portion of lean amid the mass of fat, and not discovering any, quietly abstained from eating, contenting herself with a morsel of the very small piece of coarse bread placed by her plate.

"You should have said you were not hungry, and not have allowed yourself to be helped to a large slice of mutton," observed her uncivilized hostess. "It is very extravagant and wasteful, and those who have to earn their bread ought *to* know better."

"The mutton is rather too fat," said Mr. Jefferson, casting an admiring glance on the fair face of the governess, whose beauty began to thaw the ice around his heart.

The glance was not lost on his watchful wife, although it had wholly escaped the notice of her to whom it was directed, and growing red with anger, she asserted "that the mutton was not at all too fat, and she wondered how *some* people could be so foolish as to encourage the false delicacy of *other* people," looking, as she spoke, first at her husband, and then at Selina.

"Give me some porter, and mind you froth it well," said Mrs. Jefferson. The boy did as he was told, and then, unbidden, was about to pour some porter into the glass of Selina, when his mistress exclaimed — "Stop, stop, what are you about?

Don't you know that the governesses never have porter or beer?"

The boy's face revealed that even *he* was shocked at the sordidness of his mistress, and Mr. Jefferson, little used as he was to interfere in the domestic arrangements of his wife, ventured to say, "that, as Miss Stratford had so little dinner, perhaps she might like a little porter."

Rage sparkled in the small eyes of the hostess, who, suspecting the cause of this extraordinary liberality on the part of her spouse, observed, that "if Miss Stratford chose to go without her dinner, that was *her* affair; and she thought, for her part, that malt-liquor was very improper for young women, and was only fit for those who had the cares of a family on their hands."

Selina assured her "that water was her usual beverage, and that she preferred it to all others;" but the blush that rose to her cheek, while uttering this truth, increased the attraction of her countenance so much, that Mrs. Jefferson, again detecting the truant eyes of her husband fixed on it, angrily declared "*she* cared not whether water was, or was not, the perferred beverage of her governess, but that, for her part, no governess, however *some* people might admire her, should have malt-liquor in her house."

Mr. Jefferson seemed astonished at this open display of the pervading weakness of his wife, and Miss Julia, who saw that her mother was angry, with greater *naïveté* than tact, observed, "Lawk, how funny! Mamma was very angry with Thomas for offering to help the governess to porter; and now, she is more angry, because Miss Stratford said she would not like to drink any thing but water."

"Hold your tongue, you little stupid creature!" replied Mrs. Jefferson; "there really is no bearing that chatter-box."

"Yes, I must say Julia is much too flippant," observed Mr. Jefferson; "but now that she has got a good governess," and he looked very graciously at Selina, "I doubt not she will soon improve."

"And pray, Mr. Jefferson, how do you know whether she has a good governess or not, I should like to know?" said his angry wife. "You never saw Miss Stratford before half an hour ago, yet you instantly take for granted that she must be a good governess forthwith."

"I concluded, my dear," replied the henpecked husband, that, with your sagacity and powers of discrimination, you would not engage any one who was not fully capable of the task undertaken."

"No, Mr. Jefferson; it was no such thing; I know you better, and am not to be imposed on by your hypocritical speeches. You judged Miss Stratford so mighty favourably, merely because she happens to have what you men call a pretty face."

"Well, my dear; don't you know that the phrase goes, that 'a handsome face is the best letter of recommendation?'"

"Handsome face, Mr. Jefferson! You ought to be ashamed of yourself — that's what you ought! and before your children too! Take the children away, Miss Stratford; I wonder you waited to be told to do so!" and the speaker's face became crimson with anger. "A little sense or delicacy might have taught you the impropriety of allowing your pupils to remain present, while their father addressed such improper language to you, and in presence of their ill-used mother, too."

Selina was struck dumb by this unexpected rebuke; she felt how insulting it was, and wished to disclaim every part in the dispute; but, too much hurt to be able to speak with the coolness and self-possession befitting such an occasion, she arose, and, making a sign to her pupils to follow, left the room, — the loud voice of Mrs. Jefferson, in violent anger, reaching her ears even in the school-room.

"I 'm so glad," said Miss Julia, clapping her hands: "papa will get a good trimming now, I'm sure. What a rage mamma was in! I hope she'll give papa a good dressing — that's what I do! for he took her part against me, when she called me a chatter-box."

"Hold your tongue, Miss Julia," said her governess.

"Is this the way?" demanded the incorrigible girl, applying her finger and thumb to her tongue, which vulgar pleasantry set her elder sister into shouts of laughter.

"No, Miss; it is not the way. Take your hand from your mouth, and remain silent."

"There's no pleasing you, I see," replied the spoilt child; "you told me to hold my tongue, and when I hold it you find

fault with me. How should I hold it, except with my hand, I should like to know?"

"If you speak again I will punish you."

When Selina was summoned to tea, she found Mrs. Jefferson alone; but the calm now observable in her countenance betrayed that it was the lull that follows a storm; and that the storm had been a violent one she could not doubt, from the traces it had left behind.

"I am to have company to-morrow evening," said she; "and wish you to put some trimming on my dress, and also to make me a turban out of this scarf;" and the lady held up a very tarnished tinsel scarf, more fit to figure among the finery of the sweeps on May-day, than on the head of any one with pretensions to gentility.

"I do not at all understand millinery, Madam, and never attempted to make a head-dress in my life."

"Well, then, the sooner you begin the better. You must do it as well as you can, that's all, I'm not very particular."

"I am really afraid, Madam, that I cannot execute the task to your satisfaction."

"Not if you make up your mind before hand, to do it carelessly, as I see you have."

Selina took the scarf, determined to fashion it into a turban as well as she could, and then Mrs. Jefferson intimated her desire, that she should be prepared to exert her talents to amuse the expected company.

"You must be in good voice," added Mrs. Jefferson, "for there is nothing I detest so much, as persons who, when they are asked to play and sing, begin preluding over the keys of the piano-forte, and clearing their throats."

"This last operation is, however, sometimes unavoidable, Madam," replied Selina, "the nerves often compel it."

"Why, what can the nerves have to do with the throat, or voice, I should like to know," demanded Mrs. Jefferson.

"They exert considerable influence over both, I believe," observed Selina.

"Stuff, nonsense. You may as well assert that my nerves could prevent my speaking if I have a mind to talk, as that yours could prevent you singing if you were disposed to do so. Let me hear no more about nerves, if you wish to continue in my family, for I consider nerves as another name for

idleness and affectation, and greatly dislike all persons who urge them as an excuse for the non-performance of the duties they are expected to fulfil. Pour out the tea," said Mrs. Jefferson, "and cut me some thin slices off the French roll, with butter from the small pat. If you like to have anything to eat, there is some excellent brown bread and salt butter, which I recommend you. Brown bread does not agree with me, otherwise I prefer it."

The stale loaf did not tempt the appetite of Selina, and she thought that Mrs. Jefferson appeared pleased with her abstemiousness."

"You are a little eater, I see," said that lady, "and you are right; nothing conduces to health more than a spare diet. Half the ailments to which people are subject, are occasioned by repletion."

How strange, thought Selina, that her practice should so wholly differ from her theory, for while speaking, Mrs. Jefferson was devouring the bread and butter cut for her, as greedily as if she had not eaten a very hearty dinner.

"I wonder you take sugar and milk in your tea," observed Mrs. Jefferson; "both are now proved to be unwholesome and I know many people who have left them off. Young women ought to do so before habit has rendered either necessary, and more especially those who have to earn their bread. If, however, you can't dispense with sugar, I will have some moist for your use, for loaf sugar is now so dear that no one in my house, except Mr. Jefferson and myself, indulge in it."

This hint effectually prevented Selina from taking a second cup of tea, and her hostess having observed that she was unemployed, recommended her to resume her needle.

"I can't bear seeing people sitting idle," said she, "and never was there a truer line than that which says —

'Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.'

Suppose you begin to make the turban — here are some pins, with the aid of which, you can get it into shape, and I can try it on. If it becomes me, you can stitch it together afterwards."

"I shall require a form for it, Madam."

"Have you nothing among your own things that would make a form?"

"Nothing whatever, Madam."

"Ring the bell then, and I'll send out Thomas to a shop round the corner."

Thomas made his appearance, and was told by his mistress that he must run to the aforesaid shop, and buy her half-a-yard of catgut, a yard of ribbon wire, and, she added, "tell Mrs. Dobson it is to make a turban, and be sure you beat down the price."

"Vy, Ma'am, she as good as turned me out of the shop the last time I vent there, for offering her as you told me to do — half what she asked."

Thomas returned in due time, and laid his purchases with the bill on the table.

"What an extravagant charge," said his mistress, examining the items; "Mrs. Dobson does not really know what to demand. Here's eightpence to pay; but if you had not been a stupid, as well as an extravagant fellow, you might have got it for half the money.

"I said all I could to her, Ma'am. I told her 't was to dish up a turbot for company to-morrow, and she laughed and said, as how she never heard of catgut or ribbon wire being wanted for a turbot before."

"Was there ever such a fool?" exclaimed his angry mistress.

"If I vosn't a 'prentice, I know vhat I'd do," muttered Thomas, "for it 's no manner of use trying to give satisfaction!"

"Leave the room instantly, you saucy fool. How dare you be so impudent!"

The lad withdrew, slamming the door violently after him, which act of insubordination, led to Mrs. Jefferson's giving a long detail of the unkindness, ingratitude, and baseness of servants in general, but of Thomas in particular, while Selina plied her fingers in the formation of the turban.

The next day was a busy one in the house. The noise of preparation commenced at an early hour. The voice of Mrs. Jefferson might be heard in angry debate with Kitty, Thomas, and a charwoman, called in on company days; and Mr. Jefferson, so seldom seen, except at meals, kept coming in and going out several times, each of his visits occasioning an increased commotion in the lower regions. "There, just like

you, Mr. Jefferson, said his angry wife. "Who but you would have bought such expensive fish?"

"I assure you I got it very cheap, my dear."

"What do you call cheap, I should like to know?"

"I only gave two shillings for the two pair of soles."

"Ninepence a pair would have been plenty."

"Really, my dear, I can't lose half an hour higgling about sixpence."

"Your time is so vastly precious, I suppose. And what did you pay for the chickens?"

"Three shillings a couple. You can't call that dear, I'm sure?"

"You might have got them for half-a-crown, for they're none of the freshest, I can tell you."

"You expect things for nothing, my dear; ay, and good things too."

"No, Mr. Jefferson, I do no such thing, I only expect the value of my money. Have you put the bottle of gooseberry wine into cold water? You might have persuaded the fishmonger to have thrown you in fourpence worth of ice, which would have made the gooseberry wine pass perfectly for Champagne; but you have no thought or cleverness in those matters, and everything falls on my shoulders. Mind you put a little brandy, and a squeeze of a lemon, into a couple of the bottles of Cape Madeira, and have the Sherry label put on them, and the Madeira label on the plain. Don't keep pressing people to drink wine, Mr. Jefferson. It's a vulgar, as well as an extravagant habit. The only one to be pressed is a certain person;" and she looked mysteriously at her husband, and then in the direction of the servants, to explain why she did not name the individual to whom she did not grudge the wine. "It's a different thing with regard to her," resumed Mrs. Jefferson; "for, if we play our cards as we ought, *she* will leave us the means to enjoy ourselves for the rest of our lives."

The dinner served to Selina and her pupils on that day was so scanty in quantity, and so bad in quality, that Miss Julia protested loudly against their being put off with such bad fare. Mrs. Jefferson had arranged that Miss Stratford and her pupils should be in the drawing-room when the ladies retired there from the dining-room, and that Selina was to

preside at the tea-table. "But, mind," added that prudent woman, "you don't let Matilda or Julia eat any of the cakes; I have bought only enough for the company: and don't let the candles be lighted until you hear us on the stairs, for it 's no use having them flaring in the room for nothing."

The scanty dinner served to Selina and her pupils had rendered these last so ravenous, that great was the difficulty she experienced in preventing them from seizing and devouring the cakes laid on the tea-table. Miss Julia repeatedly attempted to snatch them, and endeavoured to induce her sister to join in the attack, declaring aloud, that "if Matty was not such a fool, she might possess herself of the cakes while Miss Stratford was occupied in keeping her from them."

CHAPTER XXIII.

At length the ladies entered the drawing-room with flushed faces, and considerable animation of manner. "What an excellent dinner we have had, my dear Mrs. Jefferson," said one of them.

"Mrs. Jefferson's dinners are always good," observed another. "You must have a very superior cook."

"I am glad you think so, Mrs. Willcocks; but I assure you that even the best cooks are not to be trusted. I superintend all the made dishes myself."

"And you are quite right; there is nothing like the eye of a mistress," observed a very fat lady, dressed in a green gown and red turban.

"I thought your wine remarkably good," said another of the visitants, "particularly the Sherry and Champagne; and I am a very good judge, I can tell you:" and a great consumer, too, might, without much chance of any breach of veracity, be added, if the conclusion might be drawn from the flushed face, loud voice, and unsteady gait of the speaker.

"I am so glad *you* liked the wine, my dear friend," replied Mrs. Jefferson, with her most insinuating smile. "I told Mr. Jefferson that he must provide the very best, for that you could not drink any other."

"So here are the young ladies," observed the lady, to whom it was evident Mrs. Jefferson attached the most importance.

"Matty, Julia, why do you not go up to your dear, kind friend, and kiss her directly?" said their mother.

But while the girls approached to perform mamma's wishes, the person they were commanded to embrace stood motionless, staring rudely at Selina, who instantly recognised Mrs. Forsythe.

"Why, Lord bless me! how long have you been here?" demanded she, with an authoritative air.

"Two days, Madam," replied Selina.

"Well, I 'm glad to find you earning your bread *honestly*," laying a peculiar stress on the word honestly, "and not leading a life of idleness."

Mrs. Jefferson approached, with a look of alarm, and the other ladies appeared to anticipate an explosion of some kind, for they glanced with undisguised curiosity from Mrs. Forsythe to Selina, whose simple, but tasteful, toilette, and pretty face, had excited more envy than good will in their breasts. "And so you know Miss Stratford?" said Mrs. Jefferson.

"Yes, I *do* know her," was the answer, accompanied by a shake of the head, full of import, and by a gravity of countenance that indicated the knowledge was not very favourable to the young lady.

"If I had the least notion that she had the honour of knowing you, my dear friend, I would instantly have applied to you for her character," observed Mrs. Jefferson. "Pray, why did you not tell me that you were known to Mrs. Forsythe?" demanded she.

"I was not aware, Madam, that Mrs. Forsythe was an acquaintance of yours," replied Selina, with a calmness and dignity that ought to have vouched that she could have had no motive for concealment; "and I was not privileged to refer to this lady for a recommendation."

"No, she was *not* privileged, Mrs. Jefferson. I permit no person to use my name, unless I can vouch for every action of their lives; and of how few can one speak with certainty!" and Mrs. Forsythe turned up her eyes to the ceiling, with an appealing glance.

"How very odd!" whispered Mrs. Willcocks to Mrs. Burford, who sat next her.

"Yes, very, indeed!"

"It 's quite like a scene in a play, isn't it? when something is about to be discovered."

"I wonder if the governess will turn out to be a thief?"

"I think it 's more likely that she is something even worse, for she has a very sly countenance, and looks very impudent."

"Yes, so she does. I noticed how bold she looked when she answered Mrs. Jefferson; quite like a stage player: she drew herself up with a grand air."

"You may go and pour out the coffee and tea," said Mrs. Jefferson, with an angry air; and then, turning to her friend with beseeching countenance, she whispered, "I 'm on thorns, yes, positively on thorns, my dear Mrs. Forsythe, to hear all you know of my governess. I 'm sure there must be something wrong, very wrong. I read it in your countenance the moment you spoke to her. You have such an expressive countenance, my dear Mrs. Forsythe, that I can read it like a book."

"Why, the truth is, I can't say much in her favour; that 's the fact. No, she would be very sorry to refer you to me for a character. But I 'd rather say no more. Indeed I would."

"But would it be kind towards me, or towards dear Matty and Julia, who dote on you, my dearest friend, to leave me in ignorance on a point of such importance as the true character of their governess?"

"Use your eyes; observe her well, and there will be no need of my saying anything about her. I 'm by no means ill-natured, and have a dislike to mixing myself up with other people's business; besides, I should not like having an action brought against me for slander. Truth, you know, is now considered a libel; so people must be very cautious what they say."

The gentlemen now joined the ladies, their spirits very much elevated by the fiery wines they had been drinking, and their natural reserve much lessened. They approached the tea-table where Selina was presiding, and, staring at her with undissembled looks of admiration, formed a circle around it.

"Though I seldom drink tea," said Mr. Willcocks, "I could not resist a cup if offered by such fair hands as this young lady's;" and he simpered and tried to look insinuating.

"The young lady need put no sugar in," observed Mr. Burford, "for her smile is enough to sweeten the tea;" and then he laughed loudly at his own wit.

"Come, come, what business have you old married men to be flocking around a young lady?" asked a Mr. Blayton. "It 's only bachelors like me that are privileged."

"Can I be of any use to you, Miss Stratford?" said Mr. Jefferson, forgetting, in the effect produced on him by the unusual quantity of wine he had drank, that his jealous wife's eyes were upon him.

"I vote for our all turning footmen to this beautiful young lady," said Mr. Willcocks.

"Hi! hi! Oh, Matty, what fun," giggled Miss Julia.

Selina preserved her usual calmness and decorum of demeanour, but the admiration of the half-tipsy men grew so fervent as to render them unconscious that they were offending her.

"Dip your finger in my cup, Miss," said Mr. Burford, dropping on one knee, and holding up his cup; and his burlesque appearance in this position set all the others laughing, and produced shrieks of mirth from the Misses Jefferson.

"Good heavens! what an indecent scene," exclaimed Mrs. Burford. "Well, did you ever!"

"No, never!" replied Mrs. Willcocks. "What a barefaced flirt she must be. O, the men, the men! when they proceed to such extremities in our presence, what would they not do if we were absent?"

"Ah! what indeed? It 's quite dreadful."

"Really, I must put a stop to this shameful conduct," said Mrs. Jefferson, who had been for some time watching with eyes flashing with jealousy, and crimson cheeks, the open look of admiration with which her husband regarded Selina.

"Didn't I tell you to use your eyes, my dear friend," observed Mrs. Forsythe. "Need I enter into any particulars now? you must have seen enough to judge for yourself this evening. Don't be agitated — Mr. Jefferson is, I must own, making a great fool of himself — so all the men are — but forewarned is forearmed, you know."

Mr. Blayford, encouraged by the folly of his companions, dropped on his knees on one side of Selina, Mr. Burford still remaining in a similar posture at the other, and, seizing her hand, attempted to kiss it.

Selina rose from her chair, her cheeks covered with blushes, and, snatching her hand from his grasp, retreated

to the other end of the chamber, where the ladies were seated, approached Mrs. Jefferson, and, while attempting to request her interference to check the rudeness of her male guests, burst into tears.

The suddenness with which she snatched her hand from the grasp of Mr. Blayford, caused that gentleman to lose his equilibrium. He fell prostrate on his face, and his wig rolled off; an accident which greatly increased the hilarity of his companions, whose vociferous shouts of laughter rendered every attempt of the female part of the company to speak, inaudible. But no sooner had the men perceived that Selina was in tears than, shocked at having pained her, they, one and all, followed her, entreating for pardon. But even this *amende honorable*, though really well-intentioned, partook, owing to their inebriety, of the ludicrous character of their exaggerated admiration.

"Pray forgive me, loveliest of your sex," stuttered Mr. Blayford; "I would not offend such beauty for worlds."

"Nor I," "Nor I," exclaimed Messrs. Willcocks and Burford.

"No one could be such a brute as to intentionally hurt the feelings of Miss Stratford," said Mr. Jefferson, looking all admiration and regret.

"Hold your tongue, Mr. Jefferson; hold your tongue, I insist. You don't know what you are saying; but you will be sorry enough for this folly to-morrow," said his wife, rage sparkling in her small grey eyes, and glowing in her cheeks.

"And you, Mr. Willcocks, you may well be ashamed of yourself," observed his better half, looking at him most angrily.

"But what have I done?" demanded the accused. "The only crime I plead guilty to is having, and I swear it was unintentional, distressed this young lady, from whose beautiful eyes I would not have drawn a tear for worlds."

"I shall go mad! I shall go positively mad," exclaimed his enraged wife.

"And I," rejoined her husband, "am ready to go down on my knees, and ask the young lady's pardon; though, hang me, if I know for what; but what matters it? — beauty in tears, no man with a heart can resist."

"You are right, Willcocks! Yes, by Jove, you are right," said Mr. Burford. "We ought all to go down on our knees to propitiate such a lovely girl. Never have my eyes gazed on such charms."

"Mr. Burford, Mr. Burford, hold your tongue; you are behaving most improperly, and know not what you say;" and here Mrs. Burford became so agitated that she burst into tears.

While this scene was occurring, Selina stood near Mrs. Jefferson, as if to seek protection from the intoxicated men, from whose approach she shrunk with undisguised disgust and alarm. But she found not the protection she sought, for Mrs. Jefferson's jealousy being excited by the glances of admiration which her husband continued to fix on Miss Stratford, became so angry, that, unable any longer to subdue her temper, she turned angrily to Selina, and ordered her to leave the room.

"Go quickly," said the infuriated woman; "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, to make such an exhibition in the presence of respectable married women, whose husbands you lay your artful snares to entice. Leave the room."

"Come, come," said Mr. Blayford, somewhat sobered by Mrs. Jefferson's anger and injustice, "this young lady must not suffer for our folly. She has been the innocent victim to our admiration — too freely manifested, I am willing to admit, — and for which we owe her our apologies; but no blame can possibly be attributed to her. Jefferson, set this matter right with Mrs. Jefferson. You know the fault was all on our side."

"I desire that Mr. Jefferson will not attempt to utter a single word in justification of conduct so shockingly improper," observed his wife, her face scarlet with anger; and, again pointing to the door, she motioned to Selina to withdraw.

Indignation had dried the tears on the cheek of the insulted girl, and, disdaining to attempt an exculpation, which she knew would not be received, she left the room with a calm dignity, which prejudiced, still more strongly, the female part of the company against her. The men, with the exception of Mr. Blayford, looked stolid and crest-fallen. With returning ebriety came the terror of their wives, and the angry

glances of these last were little calculated to reassure them. Mr. Blayford, happy in the independence and impunity afforded him by his state of single blessedness, felt his courage increase in proportion to the diminution of it in his companions; and with an assurance very unsuited to conciliate the prejudices of the ladies, or to ameliorate the position of their victim, he coolly advanced towards them, and demanded why the folly of the men, — and folly he now was prepared to admit they had been guilty of, — should be visited on her who had most reason to complain of it?

"The less said on the subject the better," replied Mrs. Jefferson. "You are not married, Mr. Blayford, and therefore are not so much to blame, although you must allow me to say, that my presence, and that of these ladies, ought to have induced a greater circumspection on your part."

"Really, Ma'am, the whole affair was, after all, but a joke; a bad one, it may be, but produced by the hilarity incident on a very agreeable dinner; and I should be very sorry, and so I am sure would be my friends," (turning to the crest-fallen husbands present,) "if the charming young lady who has left the room was to suffer for our sins."

"I must be the best judge of what is due to myself and family, and beg that this painful subject may not be renewed," said Mrs. Jefferson, with an air of offended dignity.

"Yes, my dear Blayford, my wife is right, indeed she is always so: let the disagreeable subject end;" and the cowardly Mr. Jefferson, dreading a curtain lecture, cast a most humble and deprecatory glance at his angry wife.

"I need not advise you to send your governess away as soon as possible," said Mrs. Forsythe. "After what you have seen you must be aware what a dangerous person she is to have in a house where there is a man who has such a taste for beauty as your husband. The best of men have their faults," and Mrs. Forsythe turned up her eyes and sighed. "Ah! my dear friend, you handsome women, when you are chosen by some enamoured man for your good looks, seldom reflect that when youth has passed, and diminished, if not destroyed, the charms that won them," and here the speaker looked at Mr. Jefferson, "they will be apt to look elsewhere for beauty, and be the more attracted by it by the contrast afforded by the faded comeliness of their wives."

Every word of this spiteful speech took the effect intended on the jealous mind of Mrs. Jefferson, and her friend marked with satisfaction that it did so. Extremely plain in looks, Mrs. Forsythe had, during her youth, felt the disadvantage of it; had never touched the heart of mortal, notwithstanding every effort, and the sacrifice of all maidenly reserve and modesty, to accomplish so desired an object. Hence her hatred to beauty became intense. To those in actual possession of it, she felt a positive enmity; and even those who could no longer boast of it, she was disposed to punish for their former claims to the dangerous, but coveted gift. Mrs. Jefferson was one of the few persons who still retained a recollection of the good looks she prided herself on some twenty years ago. So little trace of them remained, that, among recent acquaintances, her having once possessed them would be deemed a very debatable point; and her hen-pecked spouse had so completely forgotten the fact, as sometimes, and particularly when looking at youth and beauty, to wonder why he had married the plain, faded woman who ruled his house and himself with so despotic a sway as to destroy the comfort of both. This oblivion of all her "endearing young charms" he, like many other prudent husbands, carefully confined to his own breast, well aware that aught which could ever be implied into a symptom of such ingratitude and want of memory, would but render his lot still more insupportable. Seldom did his wife's dear friend, Mrs. Forsythe, visit them, without her punishing Mrs. Jefferson for the recollection of her former personal attractions and frequent groundless vanity; and the graceless husband would have had a spiteful pleasure in the mortification of his better half, were it not that the blows aimed at her rebounded to him. To wound Mrs. Jefferson, it was necessary that hints and inuendos should be given of the fickleness and ingratitude of men in general, but of husbands in particular — hints which never failed to awaken the jealousy of his wife, and to draw down on his head a series of curtain-lectures, enough to quell the courage of a stouter heart than his, followed by days of sullen silence, or outbursts of violent reproach, that rendered his home insupportable. But Mrs. Forsythe was rich — had, as she herself frequently reminded her friends, neither kith nor kin who could advance a claim to become her heir — and, as

she despised men too much ever to marry, she should certainly bequeath her fortune to those who studied her wishes and comfort. This speech, often repeated, had secured the wily Mrs. Forsythe an established footing in the houses of four or five of her legacy-hunting acquaintances, each of whom considered her to be one of the most disagreeable women in the world, and avenged themselves for their assiduous court to her, by heaping all manner of abuse on her when in the privacy of a conjugal *tête-à-tête*. The Jeffersons were the most persevering in their attentions. Many were the dinners given to conciliate this vulgar and gross-minded favourite of fortune, every dish, and every kind of wine, being selected with a direct reference to her peculiar taste, and a ready assent being always accorded to every assertion she was pleased to make. Nor did this woman "do her spiriting gently;" she exercised an unblushing tyranny over those who, from mercenary motives, submitted to her sway. They were compelled to adopt her opinions, friendships, and enmities; to extend a constant hospitality, (which she never returned,) and to carefully repress every symptom of displeasure at the rude speeches and insulting hints she was in the constant habit of inflicting on them. Nor was she imposed on by their subservience and duplicity.

Perfectly aware of their real sentiments, and of the motive that actuated their hypocrisy, she despised them while availing herself of their hospitality, and often indulged a smile while meditating on the cruel disappointment she meant to inflict on their selfish hopes and expectations.

"Leave my money to such folk," would she say, "who hate, but fear me! No; not a shilling. They think they deceive me into a belief of their attachment: but it is *I* who deceive them. I live on the enemy, enjoy dainties at their expense, which I would grudge to buy; pass my time in amusements provided by their purses; keep up an emulation between them, as to who shall most toady and feast me; and if they outlive me, they shall find how well I understood, and duly appreciated, their interested attentions."

Such was the woman on whom these parasites fawned and counted.

With a beating heart and blushing cheeks, Selina ascended to her wretched bed-room. That she should be insulted be-

cause the vulgar and inebriated guests of Mr. Jefferson had chosen to annoy her by their folly, struck her as something so very unreasonable, that she could in no way comprehend it, except by concluding (and the conclusion was not far from the truth) that the female part of the company had also transgressed the bounds of temperance. What had she done? how drawn on herself the annoyance to which she had been subjected? were questions she in vain tried to solve. The hostility of the ladies, so openly revealed by their angry glances and avoidance of her on an occasion when womanly feeling ought to have moved them to sympathize with her alarm and distress, and to show their displeasure alone to the authors of it, was incomprehensible to her. Had Mrs. Forsythe instilled into their minds the prejudices which it was but too apparent from her manner she entertained towards the poor ward of her brother? was the next question that suggested itself to her bewildered mind. — Yes, it must be so; and yet what had she done to incur the hatred of this person?

While indulging in these reflections, Kitty made her appearance.

"I'm come, Miss, if you please," said the girl, with a look of sympathy that did her honour, "to spare you from being affronted. Missis has ordered that you should not be allowed to see the young ladies, and that I'm to undress and put them to bed. I did'nt like to tell you this before them, for Miss Julia is so himperent, that she'd be sure to say something saucy to you, so I just ran up before 'em, having given them some bits of toast and pudding in the dining-room, to keep them quiet while I ran up. Ah! Miss, I thought you'd not stay long here; you're too handsome and genteel. Missis can't abide any one that's pretty, that's the truth of it; and only I mind my P's and Q's so well," and here Kitty, the plain and homely maid of all work, assumed the air of a beauty, "I'd never be able to keep my place; not that it's much of a place, God knows! but still, Missis is so spiteful, that if I went away before I could have a year's character, she might do me a mischief. She's as jealous as she can be of master: yes, Miss, indeed she is, for all you look so surprised; and if he only looks at me a bit, — and he has a great trick of staring people out of countenance, — she, instead of blaming him, as she ought, blames the person he looks at.

Thomas was quite vexed, Miss, when he seed them tipsy gentlemen kneeling down and wanting to kiss your hand, and falling about the floor. He saw well enough it wasn't your fault, but he knew missis would put it on your back. She's such a rum un! Why, would you believe it, Miss, she was going to turn me away without a character, because master happened one day to stare at me, though I never saw it, and called me all manner of names; and the very week after, she abused me like a pickpocket, because I gave master a box in the ear for attempting to kiss me on the stairs, which she saw from over the banisters. But I told her, and him too, that if ever he tried to kiss me again, or so much as laid a finger on me, I'd leave the marks of my hand on his face; and so, ever since, he lets me alone."

Here the loquacious Kitty was interrupted by hearing the voices of the young ladies, who, having finished devouring the fragments of pastry she had given them, were ascending in search of her.

"Lock your door, Miss," said the well-meaning girl; "and as Missis said before Thomas, that you should be turned away to-morrow morning, take my advice, and give warning first. If you write her a note, I'll come back for it."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The proceeding counselled by Kitty offered some temptation to Selina. The greatest of all was, that it would save her from the rudeness and insult which she felt certain that Mrs. Jefferson would assail her with; and daunted by the dread of this, she was more than half disposed to write a note, stating her intention of giving up her situation, and depart without seeing that lady. But then came the thought, whether her taking this step might not be construed into a tacit admission of guilt of some kind, though what that guilt could be, she could not form even the most remote notion. No; she would calmly and steadily wait Mrs. Jefferson's pleasure, confront her with the dignity of conscious virtue and propriety, and if she could not convince that unreasonable woman of her innocence, at least prove to her that she did not shrink from an interview.

Selina pressed a sleepless couch that night; many and painful were the reflections that forced themselves on her

mind. She was angry with herself that such persons as those who composed the circle in which she had met with insult and injustice that evening could have the power of wounding and humiliating her; but so it was; and she learned to know the bitter lesson, that the unprotected and dependant can be made to suffer by those whose approval could afford no satisfaction, because they are known to be imcompetent to discover merit, or to appreciate it. At an early hour she was summoned to the presence of Mrs. Jefferson.

"She's in a topping passion, Miss," said Kitty, "and has scolded master all night. I heard her waking him several times, that she might have her scold out; but it wasn't much use, for he was snoring again as loud as ever in two minutes."

"I suppose I need not tell you why I have sent for you thus early, Miss Stratford," said Mrs. Jefferson, when Selina entered the room. "You must have guessed that after the disgraceful scene of last night, I could not permit you to remain a single day longer in my family."

"The scene to which you refer, Madam, though very painful, was not disgraceful to *me*," replied Selina with dignity. "I cannot be made answerable for the levity and folly of persons, for whose unaccountable conduct, the only excuse that can be urged, was their inebriety. — Your presence, Madam, ought to have secured me from being made the subject of their coarse pleasantries; but as it did not, I must confess that I anticipated sympathy and protection from you, instead of unmerited reproof and insult. I have consequently come to the determination of remaining no longer under a roof where I cannot count on the protection so needful to a person in my situation, and will, as you desire it, immediately leave your house."

"'Pon my word, you take the business very coolly," replied Mrs. Jefferson, her face becoming crimson with rage. "One would suppose you were a princess in disguise, a persecuted innocent, instead of a—, but I will be cool, yes, I won't demean myself by applying to you the terms you deserve."

"Madam, you must excuse my withdrawing, I cannot subject myself to further insult," and Selina walked towards the door.

"Yes, go, you shameful, forward, impudent—" screamed rather than said, Mrs. Jefferson; but the terrified girl had

retreated before that vulgar woman had finished the sentence, and breathless with agitation had reached her miserable chamber, of which she locked the door while she packed up her things, and put on her cloak and bonnet; dreading being pursued by the termagant Mrs. Jefferson. In a few minutes, Kitty, with stealthy steps, ascended the stairs, and whispering through the key-hole "it's I, Miss," was let in.

"I guessed how it would be, Thomas and I have been listening at the door to all Missis said; she ought to be ashamed of herself, so she ought, to call any one such names. Thomas has run out to call a fly for you, Miss, and he and I will take down your box, and put it into it, though we should lose our places for it."

"Thank you, my good Kitty," said Selina, putting her hand in her purse, and offering half-a-crown to the girl; but the gift was refused.

"No, Miss, not a penny will I take, nor Thomas neither. You don't know how long you may be out of place, — I beg your pardon, Miss, out of a situation I meant to say, — and you have already been very gen'rous to us. May all good forten attend you, Miss," and Kitty wiped with the back of her hand a tear that was glistening in her eye.

This kindness from the simple, but good-hearted girl, touched Selina, and the spirit that resisted with dignity the insults of Mrs. Jefferson, gave way before the sympathy of her servant.

"I thank you, my good Kitty," said she, and hurried from the room, eager to leave a house where she had suffered such humiliation. But her egress was not to be as silent, or as unnoticed as she had hoped. In the lobby, the two young ladies, her late pupils, were waiting to vent their malice on her.

"Ah! who pulled off Mr. Burford's wig?" demanded Matilda, "and who knocked the gentleman down?" asked Miss Julia. "What fun it was, wasn't it, Matty?"

"Yes, famous fun, only mamma says it was so wrong, and that Miss Stratford is so naughty that we must not speak to her."

"I 'm glad you 're going away, for you have done nothing but scold us ever since you came, you cross, ill-natured thing," cried Miss Jefferson, as Selina hurried down stairs,

where she found Thomas, who announced that the fly was at the door, and ran to assist Kitty in bringing down the trunk. Selina was soon seated in the carriage, and her traps, as Thomas called them, being placed in it, she directed the driver to Mrs. Vernon's; but when the vehicle entered the next street, a small parcel was thrown into it, which, on examining, she found to be addressed to her. She opened it, and discovered a month's salary, remitted by Mr. Jefferson, with a few civil lines of regret for the annoyance to which she had been subjected the previous night; and for the result which would, he added, he felt sure, be a great loss to his children. The tone of the note was so reserved and respectful, that even the jealous wife of the writer might have perused it without finding aught to justify suspicion. The truth was, Mr. Jefferson was not the gallant, gay Lothario his *caro sposo* chose to imagine, and which her invidious friend Mrs. Forsythe, for the sake of vexing her, loved to encourage her to believe. Though he might in a moment of *gaité de cœur*, go so far as to risk a chaste salute to a maid servant, more in the spirit of fun, than with any more culpable intention, he had perception enough to discover, even at the first interview, that the new governess was not a person to permit the slightest approach to familiarity. Selina would have infinitely preferred not receiving any remuneration from the Jefferson family, but she determined to show the note and its enclosure to Mrs. Vernon, and to be guided by her counsel in the affair.

Her reception was as kind as her warmest anticipations could picture. "I am so rejoiced to see you, dear Miss Stratford," said her excellent friend. "I guessed it would be impossible for you to remain long in such a family as the one you entered, and the experience you have now had, must prevent your again accepting any situation which does not hold forth a prospect of comfort. How glad my husband will be to find you here! He has blamed me, and himself too, for not having prevented your going to Mrs. Jefferson's. It was only yesterday that a friend of his told him that he was commissioned to look out for a governess for a very respectable family, in which the teacher would be treated with every kindness. We thought of you directly, and regretted the more your having engaged with that disagreeable person."

Greatly pleased was the worthy Mr. Vernon, when he

found Selina at his house. But when the cause was revealed, and the insults she had received were made known, his indignation was so great, that he was more than half disposed to have a lawyer's letter sent to Mrs. Forsythe, threatening her with an action for defamation, being, as he declared his belief to be, the only means of putting a stop to her malice.

"Pray do not take any such step, I trust I may never again come in contact with her," replied Selina, "and I shrink from the publicity, such a measure as the one you propose might entail, with indescribable terror."

After a few days passed tranquilly with her kind friends, Selina reminded them of the inquiry for a governess made to Mr. Vernon, and repeated to her by his excellent wife.

"I wish you had not named it my dear," said the husband. "Miss Stratford has need of quiet and the society of friends, after the annoyance to which she has been exposed, and gladly would I urge her to remain with us, at least for some time."

Mrs. Vernon pressed the invitation given by her husband to their guest, with all the warmth and affection that prompted it; but Selina persevered in her desire to seek a situation, and they at length yielded to her wishes. The following day Mr. Vernon wrote to his friend, and in a week after, the arrangement was finally made, and Selina went to the family.

Mr. and Mrs. Buxton were rich, but narrow-minded persons. Having from comparative poverty, unexpectedly inherited the fortune of a relation who never gave any intimation of recollecting their existence, until he was near resigning his own, when he bequeathed them his wealth, they found themselves suddenly elevated to a position, to fill which with decent dignity, they were not quite prepared. There was nothing they so ardently desired as to conduct themselves and their newly formed establishment, with a propriety that might conceal how totally unaccustomed they were to the comforts and luxuries they now possessed. The dread of exposing their ignorance to their neighbours, and even to their servants, greatly impaired the sense of enjoyment, which "the goods the gods provided," conferred on them. They were in a state of perpetual constraint before the guests they invited to partake their hospitality, and the domestics who waited at the well covered board. The handsome and well furnished

mansion, so unexpectedly come into their possession, they looked on as nothing short of a palace, and so splendid did its appointments appear in their eyes, that they wondered that their visitors were not more impressed by its grandeur, and that their servants seemed in no way surprised by it. Their predecessor, *parvenu*, although he was, had mixed in good society, and had got accustomed to all the external trappings that wealth can furnish. He had kept a French cook, an *artiste* of considerable merit, whose *entrées* and *entre-mets*, had found such favour in the neighbourhood, as to win a popularity for his master that might not otherwise have been conceded him. A *maître d'hôtel*, groom of the chambers, under butler, and two tall footmen, had formed the male portion of the establishment of the late owner of Heathfield Park; and when Mr. Buxton succeeded to its possession, he and his wife, after serious consideration and mature deliberation, came to the conclusion, that as the servants they found in the house must know the ways of it much better than any new ones could be expected to do, or, in truth, than they the owners did, it would be well to engage their continuance in the establishment.

This note of preparation sounded well in the neighbourhood. It was clear, so argued the occupants of the castles, abbeys, and parks, that dotted the vicinity, that the *parvenu* come amongst them was determined to keep up the style of living of his deceased relation, and as hospitality, like charity, covers a multitude of sins, it was agreed that the Buxtons should be well received. The servants were the first to discover the total ignorance of refined life and its usages, in their new employers. The *maître d'hôtel* perceived at a glance, that they were awe-struck by the splendour of their new possessions, and his respect for them was by no means increased by this discovery. The *chef de cuisine*, when he presented his *menu*, saw that they could not even read it, and was compelled to explain in very unintelligible broken English the signification of the various items entered on it; and the confusion and dismay pictured on their countenances as he endeavoured to describe the component parts of the different dishes. The under butler and footman glanced at each other in horror, when they found that their master and mistress did not know how to name any of the *plats* offered to them, and

saw them use a knife and fork to serve dishes invariably dissected with a spoon. Conscious that the inquisitorial eyes of their menials were fixed on them, and fearful that their inexperience in French cookery, and the elegant "appliances to boot" of a fashionably served table would be exposed, they sat at the head and foot of the well covered board in a state of discomfort not to be described. The sounds of their own voices, as they reverberated in the marble-lined and lofty *salle à manger*, rendered them nervous; and yet they felt that to disguise their ignorance and constraint, they must assume an appearance of courage and ease, which they were far from possessing. The repast was any thing but an agreeable one to them. Unused to French *plats*, even this novelty failed to gratify their unsophisticated palates; and they would have infinitely preferred a slice of roast beef and vegetables, or some such plain and simple fare, to the elaborate *entrées* set before them, the merits of which they were not prepared to appreciate. It is a fact known to many, that savages when they first hear fine music experience no pleasure from the dulcet sounds, preferring their own discordant ones, to which long habit has inured them. So it is with homely palates; that food to which they have been accustomed, they find preferable to the most exquisite viands previously untasted. Glad were this pair, when the dessert placed on the table, and the servants withdrawn, they found themselves released from the intolerable constraint under which they had been suffering.

Mrs. Buxton drew a deep inspiration, and looking up at the richly decorated ceiling, exclaimed — "Well, my dear Mr. B., how glad I am it is over. I wonder shall I ever get used to it. But is it not a miserable thing to be in ones own house and not to be able to feel that all the fine things about one, really do belong to us?"

"Never mind, my dear. It *does* seem strange just at first; but I dare say we shall get perfectly used to it in time. One does to everything, I have remarked; and a day will come when we shall think no more of this grand house, than if we had been living in it all our lives. You see the servants don't seem to think anything of it."

"Yes, my dear Mr. B., I noticed that, and, only I was shy, I would have told some of them to be more careful of this beautiful Turkey carpet, which I saw them let drops of water

fall on, from that huge silver thing, that looks like a fountain, near the sideboard."

"I feel quite uncomfortable at having eaten so many different kickshaws. Well, they may say what they will, but give me a joint of well boiled, or roasted meat, in preference to all the French stews and ragouts in the world, which clog, without satisfying the stomach."

"Just what I think, too, my dear Mr. B. I couldn't help remarking all the time these powdered fellows were staring us in the face, watching every morsel we put into our mouths, and, as I really fancied two or three times, laughing at us, how much more comfortable we used to be at dinner at Dairy Cottage, in our snug little parlour, with tidy little Nancy to wait on us, and our one good dish of meat with vegetables, and our glass of mild ale, than in this vast room, with its cold shining walls, its painted ceiling, and gilt cornices, the blaze of light over the table, and the load of plate on it."

"I confess, my dear Sarah, that the same thought occurred to me. It's a pity the old gentleman never thought of telling us that we were to be his heirs, never asked us to come here and see him for a bit, so that we could have been prepared for all this grandeur, and need not be shy before these powdered jackanapes. But it's no use thinking of that now; we ought to be thankful that, if he forgot us for so many years, he remembered us at last, and try to enjoy the good things he has left us."

"Very true, my dear Mr. B., — very true. You always say the right thing, and in the right place. I've been thinking that if we got a governess, we could learn many things from her, which would be much less disagreeable than learning from servants, or having them staring at our ignorance of many things, which it's no fault of ours that we don't know, seeing that we never saw them before."

"But our children are so young, Sarah. They won't be fit for a governess for two or three years to come."

"Granted; but if we now engage one, *we* may profit by it, and, by an intimate association with a well-educated lady-like woman, become more fit for the station we are now to fill. We can always say we wished to have a first-rate governess for our daughters, even to begin with, instead of the nursery ones,

half nurse-maid and half teacher, which some persons employ."

"It's a very good notion, Sarah; and I will ask two or three of my friends to look out for such a person."

Such was the family into which Selina was about to enter, and the engagement being concluded, a request was made that she should lose as little time as possible in proceeding to Heathfield Park.

CHAPTER XXV.

The kindness of Miss Stratford's reception at Heathfield Park, made her feel at home there before she had been an hour beneath its roof. Mrs. Buxton, a good-looking, over-dressed, kind-mannered little woman, was seated in a library of large dimensions, and classical decoration, when Miss Stratford was announced. She stood up, advanced to meet her with extended hands, which cordially clasped those of Selina, welcomed her with unaffected pleasure, and, before the servant could place a chair for her, drew one herself close to that to which she had risen from, and even pushed a *tabouret* in front of it, for her feet. The servant stared at his mistress's unceremonious proceedings; and Selina, though grateful, experienced some surprise at such unprecedented condescension.

"You must have some luncheon, indeed you must," said the mistress of the mansion, on hospitable thoughts intent.

This proposition being declined,

"O! I see you are afraid of giving trouble," resumed Mrs. Buxton; "but pray don't for we have so many servants — indeed, so many more than we can find work for — that you need not mind employing them. We dine late, too; and, to tell you the truth, our dinners are so Frenchified, that I am afraid you won't like 'em. Well, then, a sandwich; or at least, a bit of cake and a glass of wine?"

No excuse would be taken, and a bit of cake and a little wine and water were at length accepted.

"I am so glad you are come, and so pleased that you are not old or plain," continued Mrs. Buxton, looking with undissembled complacency at Selina. "I do so like handsome people."

Selina blushed at the implied compliment.

"My children are very young, Miss Stratford: too young to be yet able to derive all the benefit I trust they may hereafter receive from your instructions; but, in the mean while, you will begin with them, for I'm sure," and the speaker sighed deeply, "it is never too soon to commence giving them good manners and habits."

Mr. Buxton soon after entered, and gave a kind reception to the governess; and there was something so peculiarly good-natured in the unceremonious cordiality of this unsophisticated couple, that, although conscious of their want of refinement and high breeding, Selina thought that the absence of both was fully compensated for by it. The children, too, were pretty, rosy-cheeked, sweet-tempered little girls, who ran with outstretched arms to embrace their mamma, the moment she entered the nursery to present them to Selina. A tall, fat, stern-looking woman, who enacted the *rôle* of upper nurse, arose with an ill grace to receive Mrs. Buxton and called out — "Miss Buxton, Miss Mary, you must not run wild in that manner. It's very rude. Walk up slowly to your mamma, drop her a nice curtsey, and behave like young ladies."

But little was the caution or reproof heeded. The little girls rushed to their doting mother's embrace, clung to her, and almost smothered her with kisses.

"Miss Buxton, Miss Mary! you must not behave so vulgarly," said the stern woman, advancing to remove them from Mrs. Buxton.

"No, Mrs. Price, pray let them kiss me as much as they like," said the kind mother, her eyes beaming with tenderness, as they glanced from her first-born to little dimpled Mary.

"Well Ma'am, *I* must not be blamed if they are as wild as colts," observed Mrs. Price, her colour, always a high one, becoming nearly crimson. "I assure you, Ma'am, at her grace's the Duchess of Sheerness's, I was never interfered with in the nursery; and her grace would no more have permitted the ladies Adelaide, Victoria, or Albertine to rush up and embrace *her*, as Miss Buxton and Miss Mary have just done you, than she would have allowed the Duke's great dog Hector, to jump on her, and lick her grace's face."

Poor Mrs. Buxton looked so guilty and embarrassed, that

Selina no longer wondered that the termagant Mrs. Price had taken advantage of her gentleness and good nature, to dictate to her mistress instead of receiving her instructions.

"Perhaps," said the fond mother, with a beseeching look, "the Duchess of Sheerness was not so partial to children as I am?"

"Oh! her grace had just the *proper* affection for them, Ma'am. Her grace used to say to me — 'Now mind, my good Price,' (her grace loved to call me her 'good Price,') 'don't let them be boisterous or rude. Never let them run, I can't bear to see young ladies run. Make them always hold up their heads, walk slowly, and turn out their toes; and whenever I stoop to kiss their foreheads, don't let them attempt to put their arms around my neck, to derange my collerette and hair.' And, indeed, before I was with them three months, they 'd have no more dreamt of rushing up to their mamma, and deranging her dress, than of pulling *me* about; but, I must say, her grace, who was a great lady in every respect — the daughter of a duke, the sister of a duke, and the wife of a duke — knew perfectly how young ladies should be brought up."

Selina wondered at the forbearance of Mrs. Buxton, and took a strong dislike to the woman who could thus abuse it. The children evinced a similar feeling towards Mrs. Price, added to a dread, which, when not in the presence of their mother, kept them in a state of constraint, little calculated to add to their health or comfort.

"This young lady," said Mrs. Buxton, to her little girls, "is so good as to promise me to teach you many things, if you will be good and obedient."

Mrs. Price looked daggers at Selina, and was still more incensed, when the docile little girls, won by her mild countenance, (an attraction of which children are peculiarly sensitive,) walked over to her, held up their rosy mouths to be kissed, the elder promising to be very good, and the younger lisping "very dood," after her.

"Look, Ma'am, how your beautiful lace collerette is torn," said Mrs Price; "what a pity. But, I really believe, you never come into the nursery without having your dresses injured."

"Oh, the *collerette* can be very easily repaired," observed Mrs. Buxton.

"I 'm very sorry to have torn your pretty collar," said the

elder of the children, "but I was so glad to see you, dear, darling Mamma, that I forgot all about the lace."

"And me too, Mamma," lisped little Mary.

"I wish you would come into the nursery without any fine lace or thin dresses, dear Mamma," said the elder girl; "so that we might kiss and hug you as much as we like, without being in fear of spoiling your pretty things."

"If you would learn to behave like young ladies, there need be no occasion for your Mamma to leave off her fine lace or nice dresses," observed Mrs. Price, spitefully.

"You must not expect too much of them, Mrs. Price. I like my darlings to be fond of me, and to show it too; and I would prefer having all the lace I possess torn, than miss their kisses."

"Her Grace the Duchess of Sheerness was of a very different way of thinking. 'My good Price,' would her Grace say to me, 'do prevent the children from being troublesome; I can't bear being pulled about;' and I am sure if the ladies Adelaide, Victoria, or Albertine, had torn one of her Grace's *collerettes*, they would not have been admitted to her Grace's presence for weeks; ay, or for even months after."

"Come, Miss Stratford," said Mrs. Buxton, "let me show you your room. We shan't have much time to spare for dressing for dinner, and we are to have some company to-day."

Again the children were fondly folded to the breast of their mother; not, however, without many cautions from Mrs. Price to take care and not injure the lace *collerette;* and as the mistress of the mansion and Selina walked along the corridor, they could hear the harsh voice of Mrs. Price repeating her accustomed praises of her Grace the Duchess of Sheerness, who she invariably held up as the model for mothers, but of whom she impressed the minds of her hearers with so very unfavourable an opinion, that they concluded that great lady to be destitute of all maternal tenderness. Mrs. Buxton and Selina did not, however, hear the concluding part of Mrs. Price's harangue, nor did she mean them so to do. It was directed to Betsey, the nurserymaid, and stated that, after all, comparisons are odious, for *some* people never could be like *other* people, and it was useless to expect it. Indeed, how could they, seeing that some folk were the daughters, sisters, and

wives of dukes, and such like, and had queens, yes, *real* queens, to be godmothers, and a prince to be godfather to their children, while other folk had not even so much as a baronet (pronounced *barrowknight)* for a father, brother, or husband, and not even a lady of title, or a lord, to be godmothers or godfathers.

Mrs. Price, like the other pampered servants in Mr. Buxton's establishment, had quickly discovered that their master and mistress were not what they called "*real* quality." Hence they entertained for them a sentiment of contempt, which the good treatment and liberal wages they received could not vanquish. The high-sounding titles of some of the aristocracy whom they had formerly served, gave them, as they fancied, a superiority over the servants of private individuals, however affluent these last might be; and the good nature of their present employers, won no forbearance, for their ignorance of the uses of the luxuries that surrounded them, from these vulgar mercenaries.

When they had entered the establishment of the predecessor of Mr. Buxton, custom had rendered that gentleman used to the elegancies and luxuries which his wealth commanded, and his ostentation, no less than his epicurean taste, desired. Hence, although his servants had heard that he had *not* sprung from an ancient line, and that his demeanour, countenance, and manners, might have vouched the fact, the self-confidence, and assumed importance of the purse-proud *parvenu*, imposed a restraint, if not an awe, on his household, which those who composed it were far from feeling towards his successors.

Gratified as Selina was by the kindness of Mrs. Buxton, and captivated by a simplicity and gentleness of manner, which, if always pleasing even in the poor, becomes doubly attractive in the rich; and above all, in those with whom one is placed in a subordinate relation; she could, nevertheless, have desired, for her good sense suggested its propriety, that that lady would assume a more dignified position towards herself, as well as towards her domestics. The chamber into which her kind hostess led her, possessed not only every comfort, but was redolent of every elegance, of life. It communicated with a saloon well stored with books, which Mrs. Buxton informed her were appropriated solely to her use; and "a neat-handed Phyllis," who stood blushing and

curtseying in the bed-room, was presented as the hand-maiden who was henceforth to receive orders solely from Miss Stratford. "And now, my dear young lady, I must leave you to dress for dinner. We are to have all the grandees in our neighbourhood, many of whom I have seen only once, and others whom I have never seen. It quite flutters me having to do the honours to strangers; and I am as yet so little at home in my own house, that many, if not all, my guests, know it and its ways better than I do. It 's a great comfort, however, having you to keep me in countenance, for you are so kind and gentle, that I feel as if I knew you many years."

Selina, pitying her evident inexperience, was strongly tempted to propose remaining in her own room, in preference to joining the grandees, as Mrs. Buxton styled the expected visitants. Might *they* not deem *her* presence amongst them an intrusion, and resent it on their hostess? Were Mrs. Buxton a lady of high rank or established position in society, the case would be different. Such a personage might be privileged to introduce a governess into society, however elevated, beneath her own roof; but being only tolerated herself for her fortune, and with comparative strangers, Selina felt a strong reluctance that her kind hostess should, through inexperience and ignorance of the world, commit a solecism on its usages that might entail disagreeable consequences on her. Urged by this feeling, yet unwilling to express her sentiments before the servant, she followed Mrs. Buxton into the corridor, and ventured to suggest that, in families in general, governesses did not dine at table when company were present.

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Buxton, with a look of utter surprise. "Surely," continued she, "the education which a young lady must have received to fit her for being governess ought to entitle her to a place in any society. I have always had faith in the old saying, 'manners makes the man;' it also makes the lady; and I only wish," and here the speaker sighed, "that all those whose fortunes place them in grand company were as well educated and well mannered as you are, my dear Miss Stratford. So let me hear no more objections to your taking your place at our table;" and off tripped the good-natured little woman, with a fine glow on her pretty face, which added greatly to its beauty, well satisfied with herself

for having so far conquered her natural timidity and awe of the grandees, as to have carried her point of Selina's dining with them, what ever *they* might choose to think of the measure.

When, in an hour after, Selina entered the library, attired in a style of simple elegance that might have defied the criticism of the most fastidious, her appearance was so satisfactory, and her manner so easy and unembarrassed, yet so correct, that Mrs. Buxton felt proud of such an inmate, and experienced new confidence for the ordeal of her first company dinner, hitherto so dreaded.

"Yes," thought that kind-hearted but rustic woman, "I am now sure of one pleasant countenance at my own table; *she* will give me courage to meet the cold looks, or scrutinizing glances, of the fine ladies and gentlemen, who, knowing that I am not used to fine things or fine folks, will be on the alert to observe proofs, and I dare say I shall be sure to furnish but too many, of my ignorance."

Mr. Buxton was no less pleased than his wife at the air and manner of Miss Stratford; he again welcomed her to Heathfield Park with a friendship and cordiality, the demonstrations of which might have shocked the refined guests, whose arrival he was every moment expecting, had they been present; but luckily they had not yet made their appearance. Mrs. Buxton every two or three minutes cast an anxious look at the splendid Parisian *pendule* on the mantel-shelf.

"It 's just half-past seven o'clock," said she; "and that was the time mentioned on the cards of invitation."

"Lords and ladies are not so punctual as other people, my dear," observed her husband; "and the more 's the pity; for what 's the use of keeping a fine French cook, if all his pains are to be lost by the dinner being kept waiting until it is completely spoilt."

"Very true, my dear, — very true; but look, see, it is now ten minutes after the appointed time, and no one come. How can you account for it, my dear?"

"As I account for most things with which grandees have anything to do. They were probably careless about going to dress in time — forgot to order their carriages at the proper hour — in short, my dear, thought us of so little importance, that, whether they kept us waiting a half-hour or more, was

not of the least importance, as the great honour they confer on us, by coming, would atone for all delay."

"Then perhaps they mayn't come at all," said Mrs. Buxton, looking agitated.

"No, you need'nt be afraid of that, Mrs. B.; they 'll come, sure enough, though probably not until the dinner is totally spoilt; and then they 'll go away, declaring that we have the worst cook, and give the worst dinners, of any one in the country."

"Hush! was not that the sound of carriage-wheels?" exclaimed Mrs. Buxton.

"No; it is only the wind, which is getting up," replied her husband.

Another anxious glance at the *pendule* showed Mrs. Buxton that a quarter of an hour had now elapsed since the half-hour after seven had struck.

"I declare I feel quite nervous, my dear," observed Mrs. Buxton. "Should they not come, what will the whole county say? nay, what will the servants say?"

"Don't trouble yourself about any such nonsense, my dear Sarah; they 'll come, be assured; and pray follow my advice, and never mind what the servants say."

But, though the host offered this advice with an assumed *sang-froid*, it was clear, from his flurried countenance, that he was by no means satisfied at the non-arrival of his expected guests.

"Hark! surely I hear the sound of carriage-wheels! Yes, this time my ears have *not* deceived me;" and, as the sounds approached nearer, Mrs. Buxton arose from her chair, looked in the mirror over the chimney-piece, arranged the flowers of her cap and her splendid pearl necklace, and made a movement towards the bell, with the evident intention of ringing it.

"Stop, my dear Mrs. B.; what are you going to do?"

"To ring the bell, to desire the footman who answers it, to tell the porter to be ready with the hall door open."

"No, my dear, it must not be done; the porter knows his duty, and would very ill receive any instructions on the subject; besides, to open the door a second before the carriage stops at it, would be to prove to these fine grandees that they

were anxiously expected. So mind, my dear, that you do not betray any thing like this."

Before the first carriage had been emptied of its occupants, a second, and a third rolled up, the sounds of each, as it followed rapidly upon the other, producing a visible perturbation in Mrs. Buxton, evinced by flushing of the face, and a nervous inquietude that denoted her consciousness of having a painful ordeal to pass, and her fear of not getting through it with credit. Again she arose from her seat, and advanced a few paces towards the door.

"Pray sit down, my dear Sarah, and do not rise from your chair until your lady guests draw near you."

The obedient wife did as she was told, and the groom of the chambers having thrown open the door of the library, announced, "Lord and Lady Forestville." Mr. and Mrs. Buxton advanced to meet them, the latter's courtsey being a little too low, as she welcomed the lady, while her husband's bow lacked the ease, mingled with a certain air of homage, with which a well bred man of the world receives persons of distinction who enter his house for the first time.

"Won't your ladyship be pleased to be seated," said Mrs. Buxton. "Pray take this chair, for it is aired," offering the one she had just risen from.

A slight movement of the muscles around the very thin lips of Lady Forestville, might have indicated, to a quick observer, that this solecism in high breeding, on the part of our hostess, had not passed unnoticed, and declining the one offered to her, she seated herself in another chair. Ere this was well accomplished, the door was again thrown open, and Lord and Lady Renfrewshire, and the Ladies Rosina and Alicia Murray were announced. Mrs. Buxton, her face now the colour of a damask rose, left her chair, and again the too respectful lowness of her curtsey struck the new comers. When Lady Renfrewshire introduced her two tall and stately daughters, remarkable for a profusion of red hair, which fell in long ringlets over their shoulders and busts, their slight curtseys, and careless salutes, formed a striking contrast to the profound respect which marked the manner of their timid hostess.

"Sir Frederick and Lady Emily Marchmount," said the

groom of the chambers, and again the ceremonial of reception was gone through.

"General, Mrs. and Miss Grimthorpe," were next announced, followed by Mr. Morton Cavendish, and then the usual signal was given by the master of the house to have dinner served.

"I was very sorry that you were not able to come to us," said Lady Renfrewshire, "when Mr. Buxton did us the honour of dining at Murray Castle."

"Your ladyship is very kind, but since my arrival here I have not been quite well," replied Mrs. Buxton, the truth of which assertion her varying colour, agitated manner, and tremulous voice bore evidence to.

"I too was much disappointed at not seeing you at Forestville Abbey," observed the noble mistress of that ancient seat.

"Indeed, my lady, I was truly sorry not to be able to go to your ladyship; but my health did not permit it."

"I must also express my regret at being as unfortunate as the rest of my fair neighbours, in not seeing you," said Lady Emily Marchmount.

"And I, too, must add my regret," observed Mrs. Grimthorpe.

Again the nervous hostess repeated her sense of the kindness of each of her guests, and nearly in the same words to all, with so frequent a repetition of the phrase ladyships, as to draw a smile from the party. And now the guests, who were all well acquainted, too well indeed, to be agreeable company to each other, began to chat together, the weather, as is usual in English society, forming the first topic, and that was followed by local news. The gentlemen, with grave looks, and sundry shakings of the head, reverting to the destruction of game by the poachers, against whom active and severe measures must be put into effect, for denouncing the evil spirit abroad among the lower classes, against which some means must be devised, to check the growing tendency to insubordination, against their lords and masters. The ladies lamented the dulness of the country; the *ennui* of being compelled to attend a country ball, to take place the ensuing week; canvassed the health, doings, and whereabouts of their absent acquaintance; never taking into consideration

that their hostess was a stranger to, and knew nothing of the persons, or the subjects, of which they spoke. Mrs. Buxton sat as formally, upright in her chair, as a boarding school Miss in the olden time, when iron collars and monitors kept the head up and the shoulders down, *malgré* their owners. She tried to look interested in the topics canvassed by those around her, but had not courage to lift her voice to join in the conversation. Nor was it expected that she should. Her presence in her own house was as totally overlooked, as if there were no such person; the fine ladies, her visitors, seeming to forget that they were not the guests of the rich old *parvenu*, her predecessor in that mansion, where, there being no lady to *gêner* them by doing the honours, they used to enjoy themselves more than in any other house in their neighbourhood. Not even the semblance of an apology, for the lateness of their arrival, was made by any of the company, except General and Mrs. Grimthorpe, who explained the cause of their delay, by stating the fact, that when half way, one of the carriage horses had lost a shoe.

"An old soldier, Mr. Buxton, knows that he must give an example of punctuality," said the General, while Mrs. Grimthorpe repeated for the third time, her regret at being so late. Many were the glances cast at Selina by the strangers around her. The women eyeing her with a cold stare of impertinence, and the men with a curiosity scarcely less disagreeable to her feelings.

"Devilish pretty girl that," whispered Lord Forestville to Mr. Morton Cavendish, directing his attention to her.

"Do you think so?" drawled out that person in reply, after having examined Selina through his glass for a few minutes.

"By Jove, you must indeed be fastidious if you don't agree with me in opinion," observed the peer, "for I know not when I have seen so pretty a creature."

"I *am* fastidious, I admit; and to confess the truth, can seldom discover beauty in *parvenues*."

"Well, I rejoice that I can see it wherever it exists; and that even, in a pretty milk maid as well as a duchess, I have a pleasure in beholding it."

"*Chacun à son goût*," replied Mr. Morton Cavendish, elevating his eyebrows, and glancing superciliously around the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"*Le diner est servi*," said the *maître d'hôtel*, opening the folding doors. It had been the habit of this important personage, important at least in his own eyes, to make this daily announcement in his own language. Indeed, he spoke English so ill, that he would have considered his dignity compromised had he uttered it in what he, in the steward's room, called "*cette langue barbare.*" A certain savoury odour, the sounds of moving feet at seven o'clock, and perhaps, also, certain feelings in the stomach peculiar to that region at the ordinary dinner hour, had taught Mr. and Mrs. Buxton to comprehend the pompous Frenchman's sonorous phrase, without knowing a word of French. The host looking a little embarrassed walked up and offered his arm to Lady Forestville.

"Pardon me," said that Lady, *sotto voce*, "but the Scotch blood of Lady Renfrewshire would never forgive me if I presumed to take precedence of her. You must, therefore, lead her out to dinner, for she is the oldest countess."

"That's just the reason I didn't want to have her next me," whispered Mr. Buxton, smiling as he made the confession, "for I don't admire old ladies even though they may be countesses," and he continued to grasp the fair little hand he had seized, impelling, with a gentle violence, its owner to accompany him. Lord Forestville approached to give his arm to Lady Renfrewshire, whose heightened colour announced that she was not disposed to overlook the slight offered to her by her host, and Lord Renfrewshire, with a ponderous gravity, offered his to Mrs. Buxton.

"O, my Lord, pray excuse me," said the timid woman, "I can't think of accepting your arm, until the other ladies have got gentlemen to hand them out." His stolid Lordship stared at her in utter astonishment, and then inquired whether she preferred being escorted by some more fortunate man. Sir Frederick Marchmount, something loath, offered to lead out the Lady Rosina Murray, and General Grimthorpe gave his arm to her sister, the Lady Alicia while Mr. Morton Cavendish gave his arm to Lady Emily Marchmount.

"Well, I declare," said Mrs. Grimthorpe, "as there is no gentleman to hand me out, I'll take the arm of my daughter."

"Pray, my Lord, don't mind me, — be so kind as to take care of Mrs. Grimthorpe," exclaimed the nervous and flurried hostess.

"Not for the world Ma'am, not on any account could I suffer such a thing," replied Mrs. Grimthorpe, walking on with her daughter.

"Dear me, there is no one to take out Miss Stratford," said the agitated Mrs. Buxton, "what is to be done?"

"If the young lady will accept my other arm, Madam, it is very much at her service," replied his stately lordship, which Selina having done, they proceeded to the *salle à manger*, around the table of which they found all the guests who had preceded them, standing, waiting for the presence of the hostess before they could take their seats, and evidently not a little surprised and disconcerted at the unusual length of time she had taken to come. Mrs. Buxton was led to her chair at the top of the table, by Lord Renfrewshire, and Lord Forestville took his place at her other side.

"What am I to do with this young lady?" demanded Lord Renfrewshire, a question that drew on the abashed Selina the eyes of all present.

"Let the young lady come down near me," said Mrs. Grimthorpe, "and I will take care of her," on which the solemn earl walked with Selina to the place designed, and having seen her seated, returned to his chair, next the hostess.

"*Soupe à la Reine*, Madam, or *Printanière*," said a servant, offering a plate to Mrs. Buxton.

"Offer it to his lordship first," replied she. The servant looked surprised, but did as he was told.

"Not on any account before you, Madam," said the peer.

"I must entreat your lordship to take it, but perhaps your lordship does not like rain soup?"

Lord Renfrewshire stared at the speaker with undissembled astonishment, while the guests who were near enough to hear her voice, found it difficult to control their risibility.

The pertinacity with which Mrs. Buxton insisted on Lord Renfrewshire being helped to soup before herself, had occasioned a delay of a couple of minutes, during which the service of the table, in general so well conducted in that house, was interrupted. His lordship waved back the offered plate with his right hand, and Mrs. Buxton performed the same cere-

mony with her left, during which time, one of the servants passing behind their chairs unfortunately touched the elbow of him who was offering the plate of soup from the lady to the lord, and *vice versa*, as he was ordered, and sent its contents over the person of the proud earl, whose countenance became most ludicrous under the infliction. His eyebrows were elevated an inch at least, beyond their usual position, his face was crimson, and the few white hairs which graced his head, seemed to stand erect.

"Oh, my lord, I am so shocked that your lordship should suffer so much from your politeness!" exclaimed Mrs. Buxton, in a contrite tone.

"Or from your ignorance," the angry peer was longing to say. He stood up, bowed stiffly to his hostess, and said he must withdraw to take off his coat.

"My ribbon too, is desecrated," added he, with an air of solemnity. "How dreadful!" and he looked at the badge of *his order*, over which the white soup was streaming, with perfect horror depicted in his countenance.

"Oh, my lord, if it 's only the ribbon that is injured," cried the good-natured but obtuse hostess, "I can supply its place, for I have several pieces of broad ribbon of various colours by me, for sashes for my little girls."

"Good heavens, Madam!" replied the peer, "talk of substituting the sash of a child for the ribbon of the order of the Bath, bestowed on me by the sacred hand of Majesty itself!" and the offended peer stalked with a lofty air out of the room, followed by Mr. Buxton, who insisted on his donning for the nonce, one of his coats, forgetful in his desire to be polite to the earl, that he was guilty of *impolitesse* to the noble ladies occupying the chairs next to him, in quitting them so unceremoniously.

"Excuse me, Sir," replied Lord Renfrewshire, "I would not on any account wear any coat but my own," and he looked as important as if he had uttered a sentence worthy of being handed down to posterity.

"Then let me have your coat wiped and dried, my Lord. One of the footmen will place it before the fire, and it will be dried in a jiffey."

"Pardon me, Sir," said the peer, no one but my *valet de chambre* ever presumes to touch my coat."

"But as he is not here," observed the host, "what is to be done?"

"I will wipe my coat myself; an operation, Mr. Buxton, which I suppose I need not inform you, I shall be the first Earl of Renfrewshire, out of a long line of ancestors bearing that title, who ever condescended to perform before."

Napkins in abundance were now brought, and the earl, with a pompous gravity, took off his coat, divested himself of his ribbon, which he never omitted an occasion of wearing, so fond was he of exhibiting it, and with a rueful face and many a sigh, commenced wiping it.

"Here are the ribbons for your lordship to take your choice," said a footman presenting a silver waiter, on which were spread out divers sashes of every hue, appertaining to the Misses Buxton. The man had heard the offer made by his mistress to the peer, and in his officiousness to obey her wishes, had not waited to hear the stern, and somewhat contemptuous refusal made to it.

"Take them away, take them away," said the earl, growing even more red in the face than before, and waving his hand with an air of offended dignity.

"If your lordship's linen is at all wet, I will instantly get you a shirt of mine," said the obtuse Mr. Buxton, forgetting or unconscious of the offended dignity with which the offer of a coat had been declined.

"A *chemise* of yours, Sir," repeated Lord Renfrewshire, "good God!" and he absolutely shuddered at the bare notion.

Carefully did he wipe off the soup from his ribbon; but alas! the stain left behind was indelible, and with a pious care did he pass his perfumed handkerchief over the star of his order, almost groaning while he did so. Having removed the soup from his coat with his own hand, touching the napkins employed for the purpose as if his contact with them were disgusting and degrading to him, he held his coat before the fire, maintaining as erect a posture, and as stern a silence as he could during the operation, broken only by half suppressed groans of horror.

"Now, Sir," said he, "I believe I may put on my coat, and accompany you to the *salle à manger*."

Mr. Buxton attempted to assist him to resume it, but he was waved off, with nearly as much dignity, as the offered

services of the servant were declined, and having with some difficulty succeeded in donning it himself, the peer motioned to his host to follow, and walked back to the dining-room. The frequency of the display of his order, had often drawn on Lord Renfrewshire, the ridicule of his acquaintances, and more especially of those amongst them who possessed not this distinction. His neighbours asserted that he could not partake a family dinner with them, or at his own house, without sporting this badge of the favour of his Sovereign, or of the complaisance of the Prime Minister. Nay, there were some of them who declared, his lordship wore it when he slept; but this was rather to be doubted, for Lady Renfrewshire possessed too much "decent dignity" to reveal the secrets of the conjugal chamber, and his lordship would have deemed it an outrage to have suffered any one else to even guess them.

"Now that we are all right again," said the host, taking his seat without ever thinking of apologizing to the noble ladies at each side of him, for his absence, "I must say that when I saw his lordship's red ribbon nearly covered with the white soup, I was directly reminded of a lobster with a may or nays sauce, (Mr. Buxton's mode of pronouncing *mayonnaise*), as my French cook often serves it."

A suppressed laugh broke from several of the guests at this extraordinary liberty, taken with one of the proudest men in England, and on so short an acquaintance, while all looked to see how the pompous peer would take it. The Earl drew himself up with a haughty air, and darting a glance of contempt at his host, replied, "I know not which to admire most, Sir, your happiness in finding resemblances, or your tact and good taste in revealing them."

Lady Renfrewshire looked daggers at Mrs. Buxton, while expressing her hope that Lord Renfrewshire's health would not suffer from the accident.

"I would not allow any thing to be removed, my lord," said Mrs. Buxton meekly, perceiving that the Earl was offended, although she did not guess precisely at what, and anxious to atone for his annoyance.

"You are too good, Madam," observed he, bowing stiffly.

"Won't your lordship have some soup?"

"I could not, Madam, on any account allow the ladies present to be put to the inconvenience of waiting for the next

course, while I had soup;" and he glanced at his host, who was swallowing his with all the gusto of a gourmand.

"You will at least take some fish, my lord? The turbot is good, and the other fish, I forget the name of it, is excellent."

"Excuse me, Madam, I have a great dislike to cold fish, except *en mayonnaise*."

"I 'm really quite distressed that your lordship has had neither soup nor fish."

"I beg, Madam, that you will not give it a moment's thought."

Lord Forestville noticing the haughty air and manner with which his brother peer received the well-meant, though not well-bred, attentions of Mrs. Buxton, attempted to lessen her visible embarassment by entering into conversation with her. He talked of the fine scenery in the neighbourhood, enumerated the picturesque drives, spoke of gardening and flowers, praised her fine conservatory, and admirable hot-houses, but could get nothing more than a monosyllabic assent to his remarks. Her eyes wandered around the table "on hospitable thoughts intent," and with a zeal that did credit to her anxiety that her guests should fare well; although it exposed her to their animadversions on her ignorance of *les usages du monde*, she raised her naturally low voice to its loudest pitch to offer them the dainties spread before them.

"Do, my Lady, just taste the lamb cutlets with green peas, or perhaps your ladyship would prefer *free candour (fricandeau)* with sorrel. Lady Forestville, won't you have some *vole vond (vol-au-vent)*. Lady Marchmount," (leaving out the Emily, — a vulgarism that greatly disgusted that fine lady, who never wished those she associated with to forget she was an earl's daughter, although, in consideration of his twenty thousand a-year, she had condescended to marry a baronet). "Lady Rosina, I beg you will eat some venison; and you, Lady Alicia, won't you try it? Mrs. Grimthorpe, let me send you some *pully à la rain*, *(poulet à la Reine)*. Do, pray, ask Miss Grimthorpe and Miss Stratford if they would like some?"

The generally pale face of the kind-hearted Mrs. Buxton became flushed almost to crimson, from the arduous duties in which she was engaged, and her elaborate discharge of them, so unlike the quiet *nonchalance* of ladies of fashion, when presiding at their tables, only served to draw on her the

ridicule of her guests, and the contempt of her servants, whose *savoir faire* would have enabled them to fulfil their service so much better, had they been left to follow their usual routine, instead of being ordered about by one so inexperienced as their mistress.

"Good heavens! see how the poor hostess flushes and pants," said the supercilious Mr. Morton Cavendish, to his next neighbour. "The hostess of a country inn, presiding at a wedding or christening *fête*, never displayed more indefatigable zeal."

"*Que voulez-vous*," was the reply; "what can be expected from *parvenues*, and above all, from such vulgar ones as the Buxtons."

"Did your hear her offer Renfrewshire the *rain soup?* Was not that capital? But I forgive her all her sins against *les bienséances*, in consideration of her having caused the destruction, or desecration, as he termed it, of his ribbon of the Bath. I trust we shall be spared seeing its *remplacement*, for at least some time."

"You really are somewhat ill-natured," observed Lady Emily Marchmount.

"*You* can have no reason to dread ill-nature; for in you all is irreproachable, save and except a certain induration of the heart, which all, who can appreciate beauty and talent, must deplore."

"You are becoming quite sentimental, I declare, but have ill-chosen your time; for the long delay occasioned by Lord Renfrewshire's mischance, has greatly increased my appetite; and the *entrées* of Monsieur Mitonné, though grown rather tepid, are not to be despised in administering to its cravings. Philosophers assert that only one of our senses can be gratified at the same moment; so that while Mitonné, and he really is an excellent *artiste*, satisfies my hunger, even the delicate flattery, of so able a professor of that art as you, affords not its usual delight to my ear."

"I wish women would eat more at luncheon," observed Mr. Morton Cavendish, "provided always that I am not present at the operation; for I have as great a horror of seeing them feed as Byron had. But a copious luncheon would leave them at liberty to converse during dinner; and conversation is a great assistant to digestion."

"Then you were looking at conversation more from the physical advantage, than the moral *agrément* to be derived from it," remarked Lady Emily Marchmount, sarcastically.

"Accurate observer, acute reasoner, profound philosopher!" said the gentleman, with an insidious smile. "One half forgets the rare beauty of the shining casket, when the bright treasures of mind it holds are suffered to flash on us."

"You grow quite poetical, Mr. Morton Cavendish; but I think you have partly stolen your graceful simile of 'shining casket,' from Moore."

"Don't imagine anything so dreadful, dear Lady Emily. In pity don't. Why, if I don't mistake, that poet flourished, as they call it, some forty years ago; and I never read anything obsolete. How you, *so young*," and he laid a peculiar emphasis on the two monosyllables, "could ever have heard of him, I can't guess, for he must have been long out of fashion before your noble parents had left their respective nurseries."

The cheeks of Lady Emily grew of a brighter red than the slight *soupçon* of rouge, so artistically laid on, could account for. She felt the malice of the speech; for, conscious that she wished to pass for being at least ten years younger than she really was, a deception supported by sending a false statement to every new edition of a certain perfidious book, entitled, "The Peerage," she had some doubts that the real state of the case was more than surmised, and eschewed, as much as possible, every reference to the subject.

While this conversation was passing between Lady Emily and Mr. Morton Cavendish, the ladies Rosina and Alicia Murray, extremely displeased at having no beaux invited to meet them, vented their anger by sundry contemptuous glances at Selina, who sate at the opposite side of the table. "I should like to know who that person, sitting next Mrs. Grimthorpe, is?" said Lady Rosina, addressing herself to the General.

"I don't wonder at your curiosity; for the young lady is extremely handsome," was the reply.

"I don't agree with you, for I think her a very commonplace sort of girl; and I dare say she is some damsel from one of the manufacturing towns, the daughter, probably, of a cotton-printer or cutler, and most likely a relation of our *distinguée* hostess."

"Well, although Mrs. Buxton may be, and is, I dare say, a very worthy woman, I should never dream of calling her *distinguée*," replied the good old General, who, with many excellent and estimable qualities, possessed little powers of discrimination, and was so matter-of-fact, that the took *au pied de la lettre* all that was said to him.

"How very odd," said Lady Rosina. "But then you are so very fastidious, General, and no wonder, accustomed as you are to perfection in your own family:" and, unseen by the General, she smiled maliciously.

"You are very good to think so, Lady Rosina, I am sure," observed the pleased old man. "It is true, Mrs. Grimthorpe and my daughter are all that I could desire; still I am not so foolish as to suppose that they are, as you assert, perfection."

"Don't you think it was very original of our host and hostess to invite so many more women than men to dinner? never calculating how those ladies, who had no gentlemen to hand them out to dinner, were to get to the *salle à manger*."

"It was an oversight, I must admit; but my good wife remedied it famously. There is no one like her for getting out of a difficulty."

"I suppose our host and hostess calculated on this peculiar characteristic of Mrs. Grimthorpe," said Lady Rosina, sneeringly, "when they invited six gentlemen and nine ladies, and out of the six only one unmarried man, Mr. Morton Cavendish, who is so insupportable, that he is likely to be a bachelor all his life."

"Do let me recommend you a little *fricandeau*," said Mrs. Grimthorpe to Miss Stratford. "You really eat nothing; and as I have taken charge of you I must not let you starve."

During the whole dinner the good-natured woman attended most kindly to the young person she had taken under her charge, whose mild countenance and gentleness had interested her.

"How long have you been in this part of the world?" inquired Mrs. Grimthorpe, whose besetting sin was curiosity.

"I arrived only to-day, Madam."

"Indeed! You are come, I hope, to make some stay?"

"I trust so!"

"You are a near relation of Mr. or Mrs. Buxton, I suppose?"

"No, Madam, I have not that honour."

"The daughter of an old friend, I conclude."

"No, Madam; my parents were not known to Mr. or Mrs. Buxton."

"How very odd, that being neither related, nor your family known to the Buxtons, that you should find yourself domiciled with them. How is this?"

"I am come as governess."

"As governess!" reiterated Mrs. Grimthorpe; not *sotto voce*, but in a tone so loud as to be heard by many of the persons around her, including the Ladies Rosina and Alicia Murray.

"Well, I hope you will be comfortable," resumed Mrs. Grimthorpe good-naturedly; and to her credit be it said, that her attentions to Selina rather increased than relaxed from the discovery of her position in Mrs. Buxton's family.

"Only fancy these vulgar persons having their governess at table with *us*," said Lady Rosina. "It is quite enough that we should tolerate them, without associating with their dependents."

"The young lady appears to be a very nice lady-like person, and very pretty into the bargain," replied General Grimthorpe. "I have seen persons with less beauty, and distinction of manner and air, make great marriages; and I shouldn't wonder if in this case, a similar good fortune might occur. We old soldiers though often accused of being martinets, are never surprised at promotion from the ranks, when merit justifies it, and promotion to a higher station, won by beauty and goodness, we view in the same light."

"You are very indulgent, General, nevertheless I am of opinion that the person opposite, — I forget her name, — has very little chance of the good fortune you half prophesy for her. Men, that is to say young men, are not such fools now-a-days; and pretty governesses, like pretty ladies' maids are seldom, if ever, raised from the ranks as you call it."

A general move, indicating that the ladies were leaving the room, prevented further comments from the spiteful Lady Rosina; but no sooner had she entered the drawing room than she retired to an ottoman with her sister the Lady Alicia, where their congenial minds gave free vent to their indignation at Mrs. Buxton's having intruded into their society a

person whose subordinate position rendered her so unfit for such an honour. Miss Grimthorpe took a seat by Selina, and soon engrossed her in a lively and agreeable conversation, in which, if much of the old soldier frankness of the father, with the good-natured curiosity of the mother, peeped forth, the amalgamation contained so much good-sense and unaffected kindness, as to interest Selina greatly in favour of her new acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Poor Mrs. Buxton was as little at her ease in her splendid drawing-room, as at the head of her dinner-table. Her anxiety to discharge the duties of an attentive hostess, combined with her ignorance of, in what these duties consisted, rendered her fidgetty and fussy, and prevented her lady guests from enjoying that *laïsser aller* and freedom from ceremonious constraint, which formed the peculiar attraction of that house in the bachelor days of the former owner.

"What fine Sèvres china you possess," said Lady Forestville, glancing at some vases of that celebrated manufactory, of great value.

"Are they very good?" inquired Mrs. Buxton. "I am no judge of china, except Staffordale, which I think very beautiful."

The ladies looked at each other in astonishment at this *naïve* confession; and Lady Renfrewshire, provoked into malice by the affront she conceived herself to have received, from Mr. Buxton's leading out Lady Forestville to dinner, determined to avenge on the wife the offence given by the husband, thus addressed her, "Of course you admire buhl?"

"Bulls," repeated Mrs. Buxton. "No, I can't say I do. I am rather afraid of them, since one of the poor women in the neighbourhood was tossed by one a short time ago; but I like cows."

This blunder produced a laugh from all, except Mrs. Grimthorpe, her daughter, and Selina, who, displeased at the ridicule heaped on their hostess, marked their disapproval by their gravity. "Ah! I see, ladies, you are amused by my cowardice," said Mrs. Buxton, wholly unconscious of the real cause of the risibility in which her guests indulged; "but

you must remember I never lived in the country until I came here."

"Perhaps you prefer marqueterie," resumed Lady Renfrewshire, desirous to expose still further the ignorance of her hostess.

"Marketting, did your ladyship say?" inquired Mrs. Buxton. "I used to like marketting very much. I think it is very pleasant to choose butter, eggs, poultry, fish, and meat, one's self, instead of being imposed on, as one always is, by servants."

A stifled laugh followed this mistake.

"I see you have some fine specimens of *Pietra Duro*," observed Lady Renfrewshire.

"Peter Douro, I never heard of him before," replied Mrs. Buxton, "who is he?"

This innocent question set the ladies into a general titter, in which they were freely indulging when the gentlemen entered the drawing room, and checked their hilarity. "Did you ever meet such ignorance?" whispered Lady Forestville. "Never except in the husband," replied Lady Renfrewshire, "he really is too bad."

"I was quite horrified at his persistance in taking me out to dinner instead of you," observed Lady Forestville, "and did all I could to set him right, but he is impracticable."

"What dreadful people to have for neighbours! we must manage to see as little of them as possible."

"Yes, but not offend them, for his interest in the county will be useful."

Never passed evening more heavily, and difficult would it be to decide whether the givers or receivers of the party suffered the most *ennui*. Glad were both, when the carriages were announced, to be released from the infliction they had been mutually enduring, and they separated, both parties longing to express without restraint the distaste they had imbibed towards each other.

The unaffected kindness and simplicity of Mrs. Buxton soon completely won the good will of Selina. She saw that a desire of rendering herself more *au fait* of the usages of society, and of acquiring a little more ease of manner, had induced this good-natured but ignorant woman to seek a governess for herself rather than for her children, who were

yet too young to profit by the instructions of one; and she only regretted that her own inexperience rendered her less capable of being serviceable to her. Nevertheless, little as Selina had seen of society, her education, reading, and above all, the time passed with the elegant and highly polished Lady Almondbury, had taught her to maintain a lady-like demeanour and manner, of which Mrs. Buxton stood greatly in need, and which she in return for kindness would gladly if possible teach her to acquire. The task she felt would not be an easy one, for to an unconquerable dislike to reading were added other impediments, Mrs. Buxton being wholly deficient in talent, narrow-minded, prone to court the great, and to defer to their opinion on every subject, while professing to be careless of it. She loved her husband and her children fondly, because, as she with great *naïveté* was wont to acknowledge, they were hers; but here closed the circle of her affections, there was no room for any new one. But though Selina soon perceived that she could not hope to render Mrs. Buxton other than a very common-place person, she took such pains to convey instruction to her, and to simplify it as much as possible, that gradually, though by slow degrees, the deportment and manners of that lady became less objectionable. When confidence had replaced the constraint of the first few weeks, Mrs. Buxton referred to the scene of the dinner on the first day's arrival of Selina. "Now do tell me, my dear Miss Stratford, whether I was not right in thinking that Lady Renfrewshire, her daughters, and indeed all the other great ladies, with the exception of Mrs. and Miss Grimthorpe, were turning me into ridicule that day? I felt they were, yet I did not know what blunders I was committing, though some I guessed I must have been guilty of, from the manner in which they laughed whenever I spoke. You may remember how they screamed with laughter when I spoke of bulls, and marketting, and Peter Douro! which I only did because they introduced the subjects."

Selina walked with her through the richly decorated rooms, pointed out the buhl cabinets, and explained to her that the name was given owing to the first manufacturer being named Buhl. "Oh! my dear Miss Stratford how stupid and ignorant I must have appeared in their eyes," and Mrs. Buxton's cheeks grew red as she made the reflection; "and yet,"

resumed she, "how much kinder it would have been of them to have told me what you have now explained. And about the marketting, what made them laugh so much?" When told that marqueterie was furniture composed of inlaid woods of various colours, specimens of which were pointed out to her, she blushed at her former mistake; "But tell me who was Peter Douro?" inquired she, "for when I named him you must have remarked how they laughed. I do assure you, my dear Miss Stratford, that I felt so much ashamed and embarrassed that I knew not which way to look. Oh! the pain of seeing that in one's own house, one is made a laughing stock of, without being able to guess why, is dreadful, and makes one wish that one was back again in one's humble home, among kind friends who would neither mock nor laugh at one."

When a fine table, inlaid with *Pietra Duro* was pointed out to its simple owner, and that she understood what the two words signified she remarked on the unkindness of blaming her ignorance of a language she had never been taught, and of articles of furniture, never seen by her, until her entrance in the mansion now her own.

"Oh! do pray, dear Miss Stratford, teach me the names of all these things. You will find me a docile, if not a quick scholar," said the simple hearted and unpretending Mrs. Buxton, "for though I am not a vain or proud woman, God forbid I should be, I have some feeling, and dread becoming an object of ridicule to those with whom I am to associate. What a different notion I had of grandees; I thought they were condescending, and indulgent, more especially to those who were unpretending and simple like myself. But I suppose all are not like those in this neighbourhood. Did you notice how cross and offended Lord Renfrewshire looked when I offered him one of my little girl's sashes to replace his red ribband? I meant the offer kindly, and if he has such a foolish fancy as to wear a ribband over his waistcoat, which I never saw any one do before, surely one ribband would be as good as another."

Glad was Selina to be enabled, through her residence with her kind departed patroness, Lady Almondbury, to give Mrs. Buxton much information acquired beneath the roof of that admirable woman. In her princely mansion, filled with ob-

jects of *vertu* of the most costly description; its walls covered with family portraits bearing the orders of the Garter, the Bath, and the Golden Fleece, she had heard Lady Almondbury explain to her daughter the names of each specimen of art, and the different badges of distinction, displayed on the costumes of her ancestors; and Selina had eagerly profitted by the instruction designed for her pupil.

"You know every thing, dear Miss Stratford," observed Mrs. Buxton, "and how fortunate may I consider myself in having found so kind a monitress. One who will instruct without laughing at my ignorance."

The information derived from Selina was in secret conveyed by Mrs. Buxton to her husband, and often was the governess amused by hearing him say, "What was the name you told me, my dear, of this?" laying his hand on a splendid cabinet of *pietra duro*.

"Tell him, dear Miss Stratford," would Mrs. Buxton say: "for you pronounce the words so nicely."

"I can remember the names of the other things by thinking of a bull, or of marketing," observed Mr. Buxton, laughing; "but the different kinds of fine cheny puzzles me."

"Sèvres, my dear, *old* Sèvres, that is the finest of all China; is not it, Miss Stratford? Then comes *old* Dresden."

"But why must it be old to be fine?"

"Yes, dear Miss Stratford, I forgot to inquire, as my husband has done, why must it be old?"

"Because the modern is far inferior in quality to the old, which, being generally sought after, has become much more rare, and expensive."

"Well, as long as I'm not called on to admire old women, I don't care about admitting the superiority of old china; though I must say, that as, in modern times, we have improved in the manufacture of other articles, I don't see why we should not have progressed in that of china."

"Perhaps that's the same as in pictures, my dear," observed Mrs. Buxton. "You heard Lady Forestville say that her gallery was considered to contain the finest collection of pictures in the county, and all by the ancient masters."

"And more shame for her, too," replied Mr. Buxton. "How are the artists of our own time to live, if people will only buy the works of old masters, I should like to know?

Pretty encouragement for rising talent! It's my opinion, that, if all the old pictures in this county were burnt, it would be the happiest thing for painting, as well as for painters, that could happen. You would see what our own artists would then do, not that I think they do amiss now. Let me see any picture of the ancients that can show such birds, or animals, as Landseer's, — ay, or such honest country faces. He puts such a life and a meaning into them, that even I who, God knows, am no judge, can't help seeing that, on his canvass, there's truth and nature caught in the fact, as I may say. Then look at Frank Grant's portraits! Why, hang me, if he does not give the very men and women, just as God made them. Look at Maclise's pictures what richness of fancy, what excellence in drawing; and there's many other great painters of our own time that I could mention. And then tell me that people, with plenty of money, will only have old pictures in their galleries. Why, when I see these old brown shining things, that cover the walls of all the rooms in this house, and which I am told cost my predecessor such mints of money, I heartily wish they were away, and that in their places I had the productions of the best of our own artists. And so I soon would have; but that my cousin has made the pictures here heir-looms. I declare it's quite a trouble, instead of a pleasure, to gaze on them. Look at one side, and they remind you of one of those hideous Daguerotypes, which you must twist and turn, in heaven only knows how many lights, before you can seize the likeness. You see a mass of brown and dark yellow on the canvass, without being able to distinguish objects. You move away to another point, still you don't get to the right view; and, after having shifted your position from one spot to another, at last you see the picture, just as you do an old woman, all the worse for wear."

There was a raciness and originality in the mind and manners of Mrs. Buxton, that often amused Selina, although they rendered him unsuited to the habits and notions of his aristocratic neighbours. He was not like his more docile wife, disposed to adopt their refined ideas, or cold and reserved behaviour. He laughed in derision at their fastidiousness; and, as he became more accustomed to their society, felt less respect for their opinions. With Mrs. Buxton it was other-

wise. When she accepted invitations to their feudal mansions, she was deeply impressed with the air of massive grandeur, that reigned around. The hangings, the pictures, the statues, the plate, the furniture, all seemed nearly coeval with the houses; yet in such a state of perfect preservation, that time had only served to give a finer tone to the whole, without at all impairing the beauty. These splendid possessions, which had for centuries passed from father to son, vouching for a long line of noble ancestry, had a very imposing effect on Mrs. Buxton, and prevented her from feeling that ease in the society of "those grandees," as her husband denominated them, without which social intercourse must always be irksome. She marked with surprise the perfect *savoir faire* with which the ladies of these stately mansions presided at their tables, leaving the offering of the various *plats* to the well-drilled servants, who glided around the table as noiseless as ghosts; the hostesses not to be distinguished from their female guests, by any fussy attentions to the wants or wishes of these last. She now discovered that giving great dinners might impose much less trouble on a mistress of a house, with a large establishment than she had previously been wont to imagine, and reflected with *mauvaise honte*, how strange these titled dames must have thought her unceasing attention to them when they had dined with her. Something of this she confided to the ear of the husband.

"Stuff! nonsense, my dear," said he. "They may be as fine as they like, and think it all right not to take any more notice of their guests than if the whole party were dining at an ordinary, where every one is for himself, and takes no heed of his neighbour. But I prefer the warm cordiality of those we used to live with, before we came to our present fortune, and I should be sorry to see you lose it."

Mrs. Buxton was surprised that Selina's name was never included in any of the invitations sent to her, and at first felt more than half-disposed to resent what she deemed an incivility, and to decline accepting them. Selina overruled this intention, and explained the general position of a governess in a family.

"What a shame," observed Mrs. Buxton, "to exclude a young lady from society, because she is performing duties, to

be enabled to discharge which, she must have received an education that would fit her for the very best."

Mrs. Grimthorpe, alone, included Selina in the card of invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Buxton; but Selina, dreading to be exposed to the supercilious treatment, experienced from the Ladies Rosina and Alicia Murray, declined the invitation, although warmly pressed to accept it by Mrs. Buxton. How tranquilly and happily passed those evenings, when Mr. and Mrs. Buxton, absent from home, left the governess at liberty to pass the too fleeting hours, employed in reading in the well-stored library. Solitude, instead of being irksome, possessed an irresistable charm for her, and glad, and thankful would she have been to enjoy it more frequently. With every creature comfort, nay, surrounded by luxuries, which she was cordially welcomed to partake, the total dearth of all intellectual intercourse, and the engrossment of her whole time by Mrs. Buxton, to the utter impossibility of devoting even a few hours to the perusal of the choice books now within her reach, were heavily felt by Selina. In vain she sought by early rising to snatch an hour for her studies; Mrs. Buxton was as *matinale* as herself, and was no sooner dressed, than she summoned Selina to her presence. Miss Stratford must walk with her, visit the conservatory, the pet-dairy, the poultry-yard, and the flower-garden with her; must preside at the breakfast-table, read, and explain the *menu* interpret between the French *maître d'hôtel* and his employers; must accompany Mrs. Buxton to the nursery, to pay her diurnal visit to the children; must sit and chat with that lady while she worked (Mrs. Buxton was a great worker), for she liked to talk, and be talked to, while her fingers pursued their rotary routine; but she graciously permitted Selina to draw, or embroider, if she wished it, only making a condition that the flow (not of soul, but,) of words, should not be interrupted.

"I can't bear to work without chatting," would she say; "it is so very dull;" and so an inane and desultory conversation was carried on, the topics being for the most part furnished by reflections on the clever sayings, and interesting doings of the children, the domineering manner of their upper nurse, and the luxuries enjoyed by the supine housekeeper, and fine-ladyish *femme de chambre*. "I assure you, dear Miss Stratford, that they are much better off than I was before we

came to our fortune, and give themselves much more airs than ladies do" would the unsophisticated mistress of the mansion repeat, day after day, until the facts, strengthened by personal experience, became impressed on the mind of Selina, and the reiteration of them almost induced a state of drowsiness. The luncheon-bell alone interrupted this daily *tête-à-tête*, and an hour was devoted to discussing the culinary dainties served up by *Monsieur le Chef de Cuisine*, — an hour that seemed interminably tardy in its flight, to Selina, whose appetite rejected this extra repast, but which Mrs. Buxton approved, the hour for partaking it, being, as she seldom omitted to state, *sotto voce*, to Selina, that at which she was accustomed to dine in her former home.

After luncheon the carriage was announced, and Selina must accompany Mrs. Buxton in her daily drive; listen to the same monotonous monologue, interrupted only by her own monosyllabic assents; and return home as jaded as if the long promenade had been a pedestrian one. Then a second visit to the nursery, where she was expected to remain until it was time to dress for dinner, at which *recherché* repast, where digestion was not assisted by cheerful converse or lively sallies (as recommended by the wise epicureans of old), two of the longest and most wearisome hours in the twenty-four, were passed. Mr. Buxton related his exploits by flood and field, being greatly addicted to fishing and shooting, told how fishes were snared, and birds, or rabbits, shot, with great satisfaction to himself at least, if not to his auditors, the novelty of such sports to him giving them a peculiar zest. "I must, however," would he say, with a solemn shake of the head, and a portentous brow, "see that my game be more strictly preserved in future. I must make a few examples of these abominable poachers, and prevent my farmers from sporting or all my shooting will be spoilt."

"You surely can't mean, my dear, to do that which I have so frequently heard you censure others for doing," said his wife, with a face full of astonishment. "Don't you remember when you went on a visit to your cousin, Mr. Everfield, how angry you were when his landlord, the Marquis of Hungerford, refused to allow you to shoot on your cousin's farm? and how hard you thought it that he should prosecute poachers with such severity."

"That may be all very well, when a man has no preserves, or large manors of his own; but you know the old proverb, 'a fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind!' and hang me if I would not feel well disposed to punish, with the utmost severity the law will admit, any of those rascals that poach on my property!"

"Well, you surprise me, my dear, after all I have heard you say, when you used to call the Marquis of Hungerford a proud, overbearing aristocrat, who seemed to think that pheasants and partridges were only to be shot by him and his peers."

"I dare say I uttered many foolish things in the days to which you refer, Sarah, for I was then a poor devil that envied the rich their possessions, but wealth, when it comes to us, makes us see most things in a different point of view."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SUCH were the conversations that generally passed after dinner, when the servants had withdrawn. During their presence Mrs. Buxton was too timid to be communicative, and her *caro sposo* too much occupied in rendering justice to the excellent cookery set before him, to talk much. But oh, the long, long evenings that followed! When Selina entered the library, a torpor seemed to oppress her spirits, in anticipation of the dull and tedious hours that must intervene before she was released for the night. Mr. Buxton took up a newspaper, with the avowed intention of perusing its contents; but scarcely had he glanced over half a dozen lines ere his eyelids gently closed, and, in a few minutes, certain loud nasal sounds announced that he had yielded to the influence of the God of sleep. Mrs. Buxton would, on such occasions, steal on tip-toe to the side of the easy chair or sofa, where he had ensconsed his person, and carefully cover his head with her scarf, contemplating him, while doing so, with the same complacent smile with which the fond mother of an only child gazes on her slumbering treasure. "I am so afraid he may catch cold; or, that he is not well," would she whisper to Selina. He never was accustomed to sleep after dinner in our old home, but used to be as brisk and lively as a cricket, and chat with me."

"He had not then an excellent cook to tempt his appetite, nor rare wines and liqueures to wash down his too copious repasts," thought Selina, a reflection so natural and obvious, that she was surprised it had not occurred to the anxious wife. Mrs. Buxton was not however given to trace effect to cause, and loved her husband too fondly to reason on aught that indicated a change in his health or habits.

There sat the kind-hearted woman, casting from time to time anxious glances at the sleeper, and by no means shocked nor incommoded by his loud snoring, while Selina engaged with tapestry work, undertaken by the desire of Mrs. Buxton, plied her task, contrasting the present dull and gloomy evenings, unbroken by reading or conversation, with the happy ones passed in the refined society of the elegant and cultivated Lady Almondbury, or in the cheerful ones spent beneath the humble roof of her worthy friends, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon. Often would she sigh when casting her eyes around on the well-filled book shelves. She thought of the treasures they contained — treasures she longed to possess, if but for a few brief hours — but which were wholly disregarded by their owners.

"I shall have my fourth flower done before he awakes," would Mrs. Buxton say; "I wish we could talk while we work, that would make the evenings seem shorter; but I am so afraid of awaking him."

Glad was Selina when released for the night; and truly did she comprehend that the luxuries of life must be valueless where all intellectual pleasures are wanting. Often did she accuse herself of ingratitude to Providence for feeling so acutely the want of leisure for reading, and the dearth of all rational intercourse in her present abode. Thankful for the invariable good nature of Mr. Buxton towards her, and for the extreme kindness of his wife, she was vexed with herself for not being able to submit with more cheerfulness to the irksomeness of their society.

"Could I have but a few hours to myself in the day," would she often exclaim, "I might better bear the long and weary hours I must spend with my employer; but to be all day pinned to her side, every evening working, uncheered by a sound save the drowsy whispers of Mrs. Buxton, and the snoring of her husband, is an infliction that makes me forget

the solid comforts of my situation, and how much I have to be thankful for in their kindness."

Two days after Selina had made the foregoing reflections, a letter apprised her of the death of her worthy friend Mrs. Vernon, who had expired after an illness of only a few days, leaving the faithful partner of her life a solitary sojourner on earth, bowed down by affliction. Deeply did this new stroke of adversity fall on her; and in her sorrow every selfish feeling of her own loss in this sad event was lost sight of in her pity and sympathy for the bereaved husband. Who now was to cheer his solitary hearth, for so many years the scene of rational enjoyment and comfort? Who was to partake his daily meals? to care for their being always prepared exactly according to his taste, and to enliven them by cheerful converse, and affectionate smiles, not less the result of one of the sweetest tempers, and finest natures that ever mortal was blessed with, than of a love that had from youth to age formed the basis of their mutual happiness? Who now was to talk to him of his youthful days? of those trials that had only served to endear them still more to each other? of those friends who had long departed from earth, yet who were remembered with the fondness with which friends of youth are ever recalled? His long-fled youth, ay, and even its pleasant reminiscences now were gone with her who had constituted the happiness of both; and a solitary, cheerless existence must henceforth be his, until summoned to join her he had lost. Gladly would Selina have gone to that now desolate house, which had hitherto been her refuge and home when needed; but with a timidity peculiar to persons in dependent positions, she knew not whether such a step might not involve results to be avoided. Mr. Vernon might think himself now bound to retain her, should she, as was probable, lose her situation by going to him. She had no claim of relationship to warrant such a proceeding; and she shrank from the thought of becoming a tax on his bounty. Many were the tears that fell on the letter she addressed to him on this occasion, every syllable it contained emanating from a heart filled with regret and sympathy for his affliction.

"Was Mrs. Vernon a near relation?" asked Mrs. Buxton when she marked the traces of grief on the face of Selina.

"No, Madam, none whatever."

"How very odd; I thought one only mourned a near cousin, so deeply as you do. I have such a number of relations, that I never formed any intimate friendships with other persons. It 's a great comfort to have a number of relations, for out of a large lot, one can choose one's friends."

Mrs. Buxton knew not how this thoughtless and commonplace reflection of hers made Selina more alive to her own isolated position in life. *She* had no relations nor connexions from whom to select friends, or from whom to claim countenance or protection. She stood alone in the world, with no friend to count on, save Mr. Vernon, an aged man; and when he should be removed from earth, she should indeed be left friendless. As these sad thoughts passed through her mind, a ray of comfort was admitted into it, by the belief that, with those with whom she was at present dwelling, she might count on a quiet and assured, though not a happy home; and, after a conscientious discharge of her duties for some years, merit and win their esteem and friendship. They seemed good and kind-hearted; and why might she not hope to attach them to her by ties of regard, and habits of long and daily intercourse, warmed, at last, into friendship. Yes! she would no more, with a repining spirit, sink into gloom at the monotony, and want of all intellectual enjoyment, of her existence. She would be thankful for the good nature shown to her, and be patient, if not satisfied, with her lot.

How blind are mortals to the future, and how little can they count even on the present. While Selina was calculating on a diligent exercise of her abilities in her present abode, and on the good results likely to emanate from such conduct, Fate, through the medium of one of the ignoble tools often empowered to work its decrees, was busy at work to defeat the hopes of the poor orphan. Mrs. Price, the head nurse of Mrs. Buxton, had usurped an influence over that lady from the moment she entered her service, until the arrival of Selina. The reign was one of terror, and though felt to be such, was endured by the timid and ignorant Mrs. Buxton, from the awe inspired in her mind by the stern, and often insolent, airs of the termagant. Taking advantage of her inexperience, nurse dictated the laws and regulations of the nursery, according to the mode, as she asserted, adopted by the duchess of this, and marchioness of that, her suggestions scarcely

allowing the frightened Mrs. Buxton to have a voice in the management of her own children, or an entrance into the nursery, except at stated hours, named by Mrs. Price. The airs of importance assumed by this vulgar woman towards her employer, often amounting to positive insolence, had been checked by the presence of Selina, and, without her, Mrs. Buxton now never entered the nursery. The nurse saw at a glance that Miss Stratford was not a person to submit to the impertinence offered with impunity to Mrs. Buxton, or to let that lady remain long in error with regard to the necessity of putting a stop to the insolence of the head nurse, as she loved to style herself. Her place was too lucrative a one to be lost: she had higher wages, and many more perquisites, acquired owing to the ignorance of her present mistress, of the customs and usages of the rich and great, than she had ever enjoyed in the noble families whose high-sounding titles she was wont to quote to the *parvenue*, as precedents on every occasion. To lose her place was therefore not to be thought of, and yet to be compelled to treat a nobody, an ignorant upstart, as she termed her mistress, with the respect paid to duchesses, marchionesses, and countesses, was an alternative almost equally repugnant to her feelings. If Miss Stratford could only be got rid of, all might go on as before. *She* might retain her place and her empire, and, with the other upper servants of the establishment, continue to take advantage of, and profit by, the ignorance of their employers. It did not enter into her head that another governess would inevitably take the place of Miss Stratford, if that young lady could be got rid of, or if so, she trusted to the chance, that the new comer might be less likely to interfere with her views than the present. The truth was, Selina's reserve had increased her dread and hatred. But how was Miss Stratford to be got rid of? Ay, there was the difficulty; for, from the great liking it was quite evident Mrs. Buxton had taken to her, and the great use she was of in teaching that lady, Mrs. Nurse felt it would be no easy task to dislodge her. If she knew anything of the former life of Miss Stratford — in what families she had lived, how long or short a time she had remained in each — it would be easy to invent some tale (Mrs. Price had a wonderful fertility of imagination) which might get her sent away. Mrs. Nurse pondered long and deeply on this subject.

How provoking that Miss Stratford had no maid, and for the first time Mrs. Price regretted that governesses were not permitted such luxuries, for had a maid been in the case, how easily could she have learned every particular, of not only what the servant knew, but also what she imagined, and how soon a structure of falsehood could be erected on a small base of truth, no one knew better. Mrs. Nurse kept up a frequent correspondence with a nephew of hers, a young man named Stubbings, a clerk in a solicitor's office. This nephew greatly resembled his aunt in more than one of his propensities — he liked gossip, and particularly scandal; had a lively imagination for giving a high colour to the tales he repeated, and sometimes won golden opinions in the shape of half-sovereigns, sent up under the seal from his aunt, in return for the gossip he sent her down in his letters. She was proud to show the good writing, the decent letter-paper, the seal with a crest of a lion rampant, her own gift, impressed on the letters from this nephew, and proud also to show the address of hers to him in return, with the "Esq." never forgotten. — "Who knows," thought Mrs. Price, "but Jim may be able to find out something about this girl. She has sufficient good looks to have excited attention, and her name is not so common an one as to be mistaken or forgotten. Jim Stubbings knows something of every one; he is such a sharp clever lad that no one can find out things like him. What a fool I was not to think of it before. Yes, I'll write to him at once, and tell him to make enquiries." The letter was dispatched, and in due course of time an answer received.

"You say that I know everything, dear aunt," wrote the hopeful nephew, "and I really begin to think I do: but that's all owing to having my wits kept continually rubbed up in the office, where we have more sharp practice than in most other solicitors' offices in London. — Tell me Miss Stratford's christian name, for without that, I cannot be certain in my information. The search too, will cost me something in hack cabs and in treats, for no one will tell anything without being treated, and I am very low in cash just now; indeed, I generally am, and there is no clerk in the office, (and we have no less than ten,) who is so ill off as I am. You don't know how hard I find it to keep up the appearance of a gentleman, with-

out doing which, I should be looked down on directly by my fellow-clerks. — Your affectionate nephew,

JAMES STUBBINGS."

"He's a deep dog," exclaimed his aunt, when she had perused the letter, "he knows how to touch me on the tender point, for it's the great wish of my heart to make him a gentleman, and to be able to say I have a nephew a solicitor. And a pretty sum it has cost me too, to make him what he is. Well, well, it can't be helped, it costs almost as much to make a gentleman as to maintain one: but he'll soon be able to set up for himself, and when I can see a brass plate on his door with Mr. Stubbings, solicitor, engraved on it, I'll be happy. I'll send him up a couple of sovereigns. But how am I to find out Miss Stratford's christian name? She's always spoken to and of, as Miss Stratford. I'll go to the laundry and see the name on her linen. But that'll be only an initial, and that's no great use. I'll get Miss Buxton to ask her name; yes, that's a good thought. My dear, my dear," and the wily nurse addressed the eldest of the children under her care, "mind when Miss Stratford comes here to-day, you ask her what 's her name."

"Her name is Miss Stratford," replied the child.

"Yes, but she has another name too. Your name is Miss Buxton, but you have also another name, you are called Sarah."

"But I don't want to know Miss Stratford's other name; and mamma said, little girls must not ask questions."

"Stupid little brute!" murmured Mrs. Price, *sotto voce*. "How she takes after her mother. But if I give you a nice new doll for asking Miss Stratford's name?"

"Oh! if you give me a pretty doll, I'll ask Miss Stratford's name."

"Now, mind you don't forget."

"No, I'll not forget the doll."

No sooner had Selina entered the nursery that day, than the little girl ran up to her, and pulling her robe, exclaimed, "Tell me your name, — tell me your name?"

"Selina, my dear," was the reply.

"Give me the pretty doll, Mrs. Price," said the child, running back to the nurse, whose face grew crimson at this *exposé* of her having prompted the question. But she need

not have been alarmed. Neither Mrs. Buxton, nor Selina, had the least suspicion that the question originated in aught save the curiosity natural to children, and there the matter rested; the little girl that evening receiving the price of her docility, out of the hoard of dolls and toys taken from the children, to be toled out to them again as bribes, to effect the purposes of their artful and unprincipled nurse.

The next post conveyed to Mr. James Stubbings the name of Selina, with two sovereigns, and an entreaty for a speedy answer.

"The old lady is about some mischief, I 'll warrant me," observed Mr. James Stubbings, when he saw the gold. "She 'd never give me money, if she hadn't some particular object in view. Never did the most loyal subjects love their sovereigns as I do mine," continued he, repeating for the twentieth time an attempt at wit, perpetrated whenever his aunt sent him a coin with the impress of Majesty on it. "Well, but it 's odd enough, here is the very name that was in the settlement, drawn up in the office, of an annuity of one hundred a-year, from Lord Almondbury to Selina Stratford, spinster. I know his lordship well enough by character, and a great libertine he is too, by all accounts. He wouldn't give Selina Stratford, spinster, one hundred a-year for her life, for nothing, I know. No, no! he 's no such fool! But what can my precious old aunt have to do with this lady? Probably, the said Selina Stratford, spinster, is hard up for cash, and wants to sell or pawn the aforesaid annuity; and the old lady, who I have always suspected to be much better off in money matters than she lets out, is disposed to buy it. Well, no matter what the motive for her inquiries may be, I must answer them, and I am thankful to have made two sovereigns by the job."

"Oh, ho! my fine lady!" exclaimed Mrs. Nurse, as she laid down a letter from her hopeful nephew. "Much better than I expected. There 's no occasion to invent any story here; it 's all ready, cut and dried to the hand, as one may say. Yet who 'd have thought it? and so young, too. Yes, yes, Jim is right; she wouldn't have got a lord making a settlement on her for nothing, I 'd be bound. And I know something of *this* lord, too. I knew a pretty nurse-maid, who lost her character in his house; and he gave her fifty pounds. I have

heard what a sad rake and libertine he was. But this lady, so stuck up and reserved; giving herself airs to *me*, too, and pretending to be astonished and shocked, when I let out a little of my mind before her to Mrs. Buxton! *Won't* I get her out of the place before long, that 's all? She 'll find that I 'm more than a match for her, or my name is not Sarah Price. Let me see how I had best set about it? If I tell it to Mrs. Buxton, she is so taken with her, that she won't believe a word of it; besides, she 'd suspect me of jealousy, or some other such motive." Mrs. Price paused for some minutes, and then exclaimed, — "Yes, now I have it. I 'll write an anonymous letter to Mr. Buxton, and another to his wife, telling them that the whole neighbourhood is surprised that they keep in their family a young person of such bad character, and who was known to be the mistress of Lord Almondbury, who settled a hundred a-year on her to get rid of her. I 'll add, that, if they doubt the intelligence, they have only to apply to Messrs. Culpepper and Scrutor, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the solicitors, who drew up the settlement. I 'll send the two letters in a disguised hand to my nephew, who will drop them in the post in London, and so all suspicion will be turned from me. Mrs. Buxton was expressing her surprise and regret, the other day to her maid, that no persons, except Mrs. Grimthorpe, had invited Miss Stratford to their houses. Just as if nobility ever invited governesses, and especially the governesses of such upstarts as these Buxtons. But that 's all her ignorance, expecting such things. Now she 'll be sure to think that the reason Miss Stratford has not been asked, is that the neighbours know all about her, and this will settle the matter; for, though she is a good-natured fool, she has not courage to keep any one in her house a single day, after hearing that the lords and ladies around here would not associate with her. She wants to pass for a lady; I can plainly see she does, and she knows that to appear to be one, she must not set herself up against her betters."

The two letters were written and despatched. Mr. James Stubbings put them into the post, and in due time they reached their destination, where they produced an effect on the minds of their recipients, that might have satisfied to the utmost the malice of Mrs. Price.

CHAPTER XXIX.

For some time Mrs. Buxton was disposed to conceal from her husband the painful communication she had received. She had felt a growing attachment to Selina, whose gentleness and amiable manner had won her regard. Her society and conversation, at once instructive and amusing, had been a relief to the vapid mind of that lady, who now, by the alteration in her position, found herself obliged to confide to others, those household occupations, and that nursery superintendence which had formerly filled up her days and abridged their length. She was conscious that she had derived great advantages from her contact with Miss Stratford. She could now preside at her own table without committing any remarkable solecism in *les usages et bienséances* of civilized life, and be an inoffensive, though not an amusing hostess in her drawing-room. She felt, that she owed all this more to Selina's unassuming and judicious instructions and advice, and not prone to be ungrateful, she would willingly have evinced her sense of the debt, by continued kindness to her. But, when the thought of what might be said among "the grandees" in her neighbourhood, if she continued to retain a person of suspected character presented itself, her natural kindness of heart was vanquished. How often does the *qu'en dira-t-on*, that dread of common minds, take the place of judgment in influencing their decision, and urge them to adopt a conduct very different to that which their own better feelings would dictate! "And yet," said Mrs. Buxton, as she again and again perused the anonymous letter, "it is difficult to believe that a fallen woman could be so modest in her demeanour, so perfectly correct in her manner! Never would a doubt of her propriety have entered my thoughts. After this, who can I ever trust? so good, so irreproachable as she seemed."

Mrs. Buxton made a very common mistake in this reasoning. Many suppose that every good quality departs, when chastity, that most essential of feminine virtues, no longer sanctifies the temple that should enshrine it. But the examples are not few of modesty surviving to mourn the death of her sister, virtue, and of a consciousness of having sinned, rendering those who feel it, more anxious to cultivate every other womanly virtue, in order to atone, if possible, for the

loss of that which is the greatest of them all. Hence the erroneous opinions entertained of those who have sinned; and who, therefore, are believed to be as immodest as they are sinful.

"Yes, I must show this letter to my husband," said Mrs. Buxton, after long debating the point with herself, "it would not be right to keep it from him: men know the world better than women, and what to do in such emergencies."

She had hardly uttered this soliloquy, when her *caro sposo* entered, holding an open letter in his hand, and his countenance unusually grave.

"Look here, Sarah," said he, handing her the epistle, "this is a very disagreeable business. Who 'd have thought of her turning out to be such a person?"

Mrs. Buxton only read a line, when she perceived that the letter addressed to her husband was a fac-simile of the one she had received by the same post.

"See, my dear," observed she, much agitated, "here is a similar one written to me. I'm so shocked. If the statement should prove true, what a hypocrite! what a dreadful person she must be!"

"I can hardly believe it," replied Mr. Buxton, "for if she was the sort of person here represented," and he pointed to the letter, "I, who know the world, and who certainly understand your sex," and he drew himself up self-complacently, "would have detected something in her manner that would have opened my eyes at once. I have been civil to her too, yes, devilish civil," and he cast a glance at the large mirror near to which he was standing, and drew up his shirt collars, "and when a fellow is not worse-looking, if not better-looking than his neighbours, and is as civil to a pretty girl as I have been to this person, I am convinced, that were she not strictly virtuous, she would have let him see that his civilities were not thrown away."

Mr. Buxton assumed, while speaking, such a libertine air, that, shocked and surprised, his wife burst into a fit of tears, and sunk into a chair.

"What's the matter, Sarah, what do you cry for?"

"Oh! Mr. Bux-ton," sobbed his better half, "I never expected tha-t you would h-ave such wick-ed thoug-hts in your head, Oh! dear, oh! dear," and she sobbed still more, "how

little I knew your heart. So you ha-ve been so very ci-vil as you c-all it, to Miss Stratford, and I ne-ver sus-pec-ted what bad thoughts were passing in your mind. And you look so diff-e-rent too — quite hardened like. Oh! I can't bear to see you so changed," and the poor woman's tears fell faster.

"Stuff, nonsense, my dear Sarah, you mustn't make a fool of yourself; I assure you I never gave a thought to Miss Stratford," and the speaker assumed the same air of libertinism that had previously produced so painful an effect on his wife. It was an air that said as plain as an air could speak, "If I *did* happen to wish to win a pretty woman's favour, I should only have to make the attempt in order to succeed."

"And so long as we have been married too," said Mrs. Buxton, still shedding tears, "and I your first and only love, as I have so often heard you say, and now to hear you speak of knowing woman so well, just as if you had been one of those horrid rakes who think of nothing in the world but running after them. Oh! I never expected Mr. Buxton, that you would make me feel as I now do."

"Why to hear you talk, Sarah, one would really imagine that I had been playing the deuce. Come, dry up your tears, my dear, you have no manner of cause for them. 'Pon my soul you hav'n't. There, let me kiss you, and no more crying; and let us at once decide what is to be done in this vexatious business."

"I 'm determined Miss Stratford shall go," said Mrs. Buxton, "and what 's more, I'll never again have a handsome governess."

"But would it not be cruel as well as unjust, to send the poor girl away without sifting this tale?"

"Poor girl, indeed; I have no patience with you, Mr. Buxton. I see you want to have her kept here; but it shan't be. Nothing will induce me to suffer her to remain."

Mrs. Buxton, the quiet, well tempered Mrs. Buxton, hitherto so passive and gentle, had now become an angry and unreasonable woman, excited by the pangs of jealousy for the first time awakened in her heart.

"I assure you, my dear, I by no means wish to have Miss Stratford retained; but as the charge against her is brought only by an anonymous letter, we owe it to her and to ourselves too, not to act in it, until by a reference to Messrs. Culpepper

and Scrutor, the persons named in the letter, we have ascertained the truth. I know something of these solicitors, and will at once write to inquire whether they drew a deed of settlement from Lord Almondbury to Miss Selina Stratford. If they reply in the affirmative, there can no longer be a doubt, and their answer I shall have the day after to-morrow."

"To please you, Mr. Buxton, I will say or do nothing in this painful business, until the answer comes; but I warn you, that even should it disprove the statement in the letter, I could not bear to have her continue in this house. It may be wrong, it may be foolish, but I can't help it. Suspicions *have* come into my head, all through your rakish looks and manner when you spoke of her; and I feel I never again shall be the same happy woman I was, when I thought you knew nothing, nor cared about any woman but your own wife."

Mr. Buxton thought it rather a good joke to pass in the mind of his wife as a man who *might* please others of her sex, and at first enjoyed her jealousy, which was gratifying to his vanity; but he now began to think he had gone too far with his pleasantry, and, as he marked the flushed cheeks and flashing eyes of his wife, it occurred to him that his comfort might be very much impeded, if not destroyed, by the demon he had evoked in her previously tranquil breast.

"I can't bear to see her after all this," said Mrs. Buxton. "I know I shall be sure to let her perceive by my manner that all is not right, whatever pains I may take to conceal my feelings. I'll not go down stairs to-day, or to-morrow, and that will save me the annoyance of meeting her."

"Do as you please, my dear, about that."

"Oh! then, you wish me to remain in my room, Mr. Buxton, I suppose, that you may have a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Stratford! But I'll disappoint you, that I will. I *won't* stay in my room; not if I were dying would I give you such an opportunity of being alone with that girl."

"'Pon my soul, Sarah, you are making a great fool of yourself. I merely assented to your own proposal of remaining in your room, thinking, as you said, that it would be painful to you to meet that poor girl."

"Mr. Buxton, Mr. Buxton, you will drive me mad, that 's what you will do, with your poor girl, indeed; as if I am not the real person to be pitied. Oh! did I ever think you would

give me such pain?" And here Mrs. Buxton's tears streamed afresh.

"You will make me lose all patience, indeed you will, Sarah, by persevering in such folly. There's the clock striking two. The luncheon bell will ring in a moment; wipe your eyes, and go down as usual, and I will write to Messrs. Culpepper and Scrutor."

Mrs. Buxton did as she was told, and descended to the dining room, when the calm aspect of Selina almost made her disbelieve the statement contained in the anonymous letter, and even chased every jealous feeling that had, for the last two hours, been torturing her breast.

There is an indescribable something in the countenance and manner of a virtuous woman, which although often imperceptible to men, who are ever prone to view objects through the distorted medium of their own corrupt notions, which appeals with irresistible force to the breasts of women. Mrs. Buxton felt this influence when she looked at the open brow, and the steady, clear eye of Selina, which met her glance with an expression of frankness and truthfulness that re-established her former confidence.

"How could I have doubted her?" said she to herself; and a blush of shame mounted to her cheeks. And yet, though now convinced of Selina's innocence, Mrs. Buxton was ill at ease in the presence of her governess. She was dissatisfied with herself for her having put faith in an anonymous letter; she was ashamed of the jealousy she had displayed to her husband, and yet she knew her own weakness to be such, that she had not moral courage enough, though firmly believing Selina's purity, to retain her beneath her roof in defiance of the opinion which the anonymous letter stated, was entertained against her by the grandees of the neighbourhood. How well did the wily nurse prove her knowledge of the character of her mistress in the letter, when she inserted the paragraph relative to the neighbourhood being cognizant of the alleged frailty of Miss Stratford!

Such was the weakness of Mrs. Buxton, and so great was her respect for nobility, that could she have had the most undeniable proofs of the innocence of Selina, joined to the innate conviction which she entertained herself on that point, she would not dare to retain her whom her great neighbours

condemned. How strange are the workings of the human heart! Mrs. Buxton, though really liking Miss Stratford, wished, yes, in her secret thoughts desired, that the statement in the anonymous letter should be confirmed by the answer of Messrs. Culpepper and Scrutor, in order that she might be justified for sending Miss Stratford away. Such are the lengths to which weak minds can be carried, when the fear of, not the world's dread laugh, but of the comments of a few country neighbours, for whom no sentiment of esteem or friendship is entertained, can urge a woman, not naturally hard hearted or ill disposed, to such injustice and cruelty.

The answer from Messrs. Culpepper and Scrutor arrived, and the writer, after denying the right of any gentleman to inquire into the transactions between their house and any of their clients, stated, that respect for the high character of Mr. Buxton, of whom they knew nothing but that he had lately inherited a great fortune, and had once called at their office, about purchasing the right of a small manor adjoining his own large one, induced the writer to swerve for once from the usual system of secrecy of the house of Culpepper and Scrutor, and to admit that a deed of settlement had been drawn up in their office, by the instructions of the Right Honourable Lord Almondbury, granting, for her natural life, an annuity of one hundred guineas a year to Miss Selina Stratford. It was added that, in making this unusual disclosure, reliance was placed in the honour and discretion of Mr. Buxton, not to reveal what had been confided to him.

"Yes, she must go," said Mrs. Buxton, as soon as she had perused the letter handed to her by her husband.

"But what if this annuity were granted to her for no lapse of virtue, but as an honourable reward for good conduct?" observed Mr. Buxton.

"If she were an elderly woman, who had brought up his children from infancy, and so was pensioned off, there might be a chance of the matter being as you say, my dear, but think of her youth, and his lordship's character as a libertine, as the letter stated, and you must admit that Miss Stratford could not have got an annuity for having brought up a family, she being herself but a very young woman."

"Still I cannot believe her guilty; I cannot, indeed, my dear Sarah."

"But, innocent or guilty, she must go. We could not think of keeping her with us, in defiance of the opinion of all the nobility in the neighbourhood. Already have they marked their sense of her conduct by never including her in any of their invitations to us. If this does not show their opinion, I know not what could."

"But, if it so happened that these great lords and ladies *don't* invite governesses in general, and therefore meant no slight to Miss Stratford, in particular? and this may, after all, be the case; and you and I, my dear Sarah, not being acquainted with the etiquette in such matters, may have taken as an affront to her, that which is but a general custom."

"Why, you, Mr. Buxton, saw the statement in the letters as well as I did; and as the part about the annuity has been proved true, depend upon it all the rest is."

"I wish I knew any one that I could inquire of, as to whether it 's the custom to invite governesses when their employers are asked out?"

"Pray, my dear, make no such inquiry. It would only get us laughed at among the whole of this proud set in our neighbourhood, for showing our ignorance."

"All I can say, Sarah, is, that if you felt as I do, convinced of this poor girl's innocence, in spite of the malicious anonymous letter, and the admission on the part of the solicitors, hang me if I would not let her remain here, without caring a fig for what all the grandees in the neighbourhood might think, or say, about the matter."

"I am surprised, Mr. Buxton, to see you get so very warm on this subject; and more than that, Mr. Buxton, I see plainly you have set your heart on keeping this girl here, and I will not consent to have any one under the same roof with me whose character is the topic of all the noble families around us."

"Well, let her go. Anything for a quiet life; but I really thought you had more heart in you, Sarah, ay, and more moral courage too, than to throw over a poor girl, whose innocence you say you believe, out of dread of what lords and ladies may say."

"And I thought, Mr. Buxton, that you had less heart to spare, than to be ready to turn a Don Quixote for a person who you now know, beyond a doubt, has received an annuity

from one of the greatest libertines in England!" and Mrs. Buxton's cheeks grew red, and tears of anger started to her eyes, as she finished the sentence.

"Send her away, send her away, in God's name, Sarah! and let me never hear the poor girl's name again."

"Ay, there you go again. Poor girl, indeed! I know not why you should call her poor girl! But how had I best tell her that I have no longer occasion for her services?"

"Ah! I see you are ashamed of yourself! But — but — spare me the angry remonstrance I see hovering on your lips. If you feel reluctant to communicate personally with her, write a note, and say that we shall be compelled to leave home for an indefinite time, therefore must part from her, and that she is at liberty to go as soon as she pleases. You ought, in common decency, to make her a handsome present, for you must allow, Sarah, that she has been of the greatest possible service to us here."

"So she has, my dear, and I will gladly make her whatever present you think I ought; but I really can't write a falsehood. If I say we are going from home, we must positively go somewhere for a little while; for I could not reconcile it to my conscience to write a story."

"Well, I 've no objection to go any where you like. And I 'll give you fifty pounds, over and above her salary, to make a present to Miss Stratford."

The note was written and despatched to Selina, whose astonishment at its contents may easily be imagined. The style of the note, too, though meant to be civil, if not kind, was so constrained, so formal, that, as she perused the letter, she felt that there was more than met the eye in it; that the sentiments in her favour, so often avowed by Mrs. Buxton, must have undergone a total revolution, before it could have been written. In what could this change have originated? was the next thought that presented itself to her mind. But vain was the search to discover a cause for a conduct so unexpected, so at variance with all the previous kind treatment experienced at the hands of Mrs. Buxton. She was more than half tempted to request an interview with that lady, and to intreat an explanation; but her pride and conscious innocence revolted at taking a step that might lead Mrs. Buxton to imagine that she wished to change the resolution taken to

give her her *congé*. She therefore contented herself by writing a letter, stating that she would be ready to depart the next morning; and adding, that she must request a few lines from Mrs. Buxton, to certify that since her entrance into the family she had given no cause for dissatisfaction. The abruptness of the notice to give up her situation must, she further added, plead her excuse for this request, as she wished her friends to be satisfied that no fault on her part had occasioned her sudden dismissal. Poor Selina sighed as she wrote the *s* to friend; for she remembered that she had only one on earth, on the continuance of whose regard she could count. A few hours before, she believed that she might reckon on the lasting friendship of Mrs. Buxton, and on finding a peaceful, if not a happy, home beneath her roof, for many years to come. But how short a time had it taken to destroy these illusions, and to teach her that, henceforth, she must put less faith in professions of friendship. To accept the liberal gift offered by her employer, unaccompanied by any of the kindness or cordial assurances of undiminished regard and esteem that would have given value to it, she felt would be impossible, so she enclosed the cheque in her letter to Mrs. Buxton, politely but firmly declining it.

"See," said that lady to her husband, after reading the letter, "here are two corroborative proofs that the charge against Miss Stratford is true. In the first place, she asks no explanation, which she decidedly would, if she felt conscious that she could justify herself from every accusation; and, in the second, if she did not possess an independence through the annuity, she would not have resigned so liberal a gift as fifty pounds, which, to a person relying solely on her salary for maintenance, is a little fortune."

Such were the charitable conclusions of Mrs. Buxton, to which her husband, whether convinced of their justice, or fearful of making any defence in favour of the accused, which might again awaken the jealousy of his wife, made no reply, except to express his regret that the proffered gift had not been accepted.

"The fault is not ours, Mr. Buxton; had it been wanted it would have been kept," observed his wife. "I think," resumed she, after a little reflection, "that I may, without wounding my conscience, comply with her request, for cer-

tainly, since she has been here, I have seen nothing to find fault with. As far as my own personal experience goes, I might speak highly of her, and, unless required to explain why I parted with her, I don't think myself compelled to denounce her."

A letter, consistent with this mental reservation, was written, and given to Selina, when, after much consultation, and considerable reluctance, Mrs. Buxton was prevailed on by her husband to meet her at dinner. Again the appearance and manner of Miss Stratford produced their former influence in her favour, on the weak-minded Mrs. Buxton, who felt an embarrassment in the presence of the poor and unfriended girl she was expelling from her house without affording her a chance of justifying herself. But Mrs. Buxton, conscious of her own weakness, felt aware that, even could the most convincing proofs of Selina's innocence be given her, she had not moral courage sufficient to uphold her against the opinions of her noble neighbours. The evening passed slowly and painfully to all three. At parting, Mrs. Buxton tried again to press on Selina the gift proffered in the morning, but it was steadily rejected; and when Selina wished them farewell, both husband and wife felt a sense of shame and embarrassment from which a consciousness of her own freedom from a single act or thought that could have merited the change in their conduct towards her, kept the poor and dependant girl exempt. She had written to her friend, Mr. Vernon, to say that she would become his guest the next evening, reserving, until their meeting, the fact that she was leaving for ever the home she had so lately thought would be her permanent one for years to come. The whole conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Buxton was so inexplicable to her, that she could not attempt to explain it; but she well knew that the confidence in her, entertained by her excellent and tried friend, could not be shaken by the caprice and injustice of others, so no doubt of a warm and affectionate welcome occurred to add to her chagrin at her abrupt dismissal.

CHAPTER XXX.

The meeting between Selina and her old and kind friend, was very trying to the feelings of both; and yet the conviction

of the perfect sympathy in their grief, was soothing and consolatory to each. The worthy man found relief in dwelling on the many excellent qualities of his departed wife, to one whom he knew had always duly appreciated them; and Selina was gratified by hearing that, to the last, Mrs. Vernon had retained an almost maternal affection for her. How did the vacant chair, the little work-table and footstool, so many years used by *her* whom they should never more see on earth, affect Selina! She found the bereaved husband terribly shaken by the blow that had destroyed his domestic happiness. His health, previously so good, was now much impaired, and his spirits had received a shock not to be overcome at his advanced age.

People are apt to imagine, that such afflictions as that under which Mr. Vernon was now suffering, are most heavily felt ere age has blunted the feelings, and when the vigour of youth adds poignancy to them. Perhaps grief may then be most vehement, just as fevers are more active with the youthful than with the aged; but if sorrow be less violent with the old than with the young, is its duration not much longer, and its influence more baneful? Habit, which forges the strongest chains, has rivetted those that bind an affectionate old couple together during a union of many years, so closely, that when the link is broken by death, life becomes insupportable to the survivor. With the lost partner of his joys and sorrows, his good and evil fortune, departs all the pleasant memories of his youth and manhood, and he enters the dark evening of life, uncheered by the companion who had shared its sunshine. The position of his young friend was the sole thought, on this side of the grave, that drew Mr. Vernon from the grief that was undermining his health, and rapidly conducting him to the tomb that had so lately closed over the mortal remains of his departed wife. When told of the unexpected and abrupt manner in which Selina had been dismissed, and informed of the extreme kindness she had experienced, up to the last three days of her abode with Mr. and Mrs. Buxton, he felt convinced that there must exist some unexplained cause to account for such conduct. The testimonial in Selina's favour, written by Mrs. Buxton, did not satisfy him. There lurked, he was persuaded, some mystery, which, in justice to Selina, ought to be laid bare,

and he determined that, as far as it lay in his power, it should be solved. He wrote to the friend who had applied to him when Selina was engaged, and demanded, as an act of justice, that Mr. Buxton should explain to this their mutual acquaintance, the cause of Miss Stratford's sudden dismissal. The tone in which this request was made, drew from Mr. Buxton a statement of the whole affair. One of the anonymous letters written to him was forwarded for inspection; and great was the shock and disgust Selina's friend experienced when he perused it. He instantly appealed to Lord Almondbury, whose return from the continent he had noticed announced in a newspaper a few days before, related the whole affair to him, and entreated his lordship to justify Miss Stratford.

Lord Almondbury, indignant at the calumny, immediately wrote to Mr. Buxton, stating that, at the dying request of his departed wife, he had instructed his lawyers to draw up a deed of settlement, of one hundred pounds per annum, to Miss Stratford, for her life, as a testimonial of the high opinion, and warm esteem, entertained for that young lady by the deceased countess, who had also marked her regard by other gifts. That, to his sincere regret, the settlement had been rejected, as had also been the repeated offer made to Miss Stratford to continue the governess of his daughter; and his lordship added, that so great was the respect he felt for the principles and conduct of the young lady, that he knew no one under whose care and tuition he would so readily place his child. But Lord Almondbury was determined the affair should not rest there; for he went to Messrs. Culpepper and Scrutor, severely reprehended them for their indiscretion, dismissed them from the management of his affairs, and proved, by destroying the deed of settlement in their presence, that it had never been accepted, though he took especial care to explain that it was by the desire of his departed countess it had been drawn up.

Great was the surprise and confusion of Mr. and Mrs. Buxton when Lord Almondbury's letter reached them. "Well, my dear, you will remember that I never believed Miss Stratford guilty," observed Mrs. Buxton.

"And I am quite sure *I* did not," replied her husband.

"If my advice had been followed," added he, "the poor girl never should have left the house."

"But with our noble neighbours," said Mrs. Buxton, "what could we have done?"

"Not cared a fig about them. They 'll go anywhere where they get good dinners and wine, like mine."

"Nevertheless, my dear, it would have been very disagreeable to have exposed ourselves to observations, perhaps to slights, on account of a person who was no relation."

"I 'll tell you, Sarah, for the twentieth time though it may be, that we are too rich to meet with slights from our neighbours, and as for their observations, who will have the impudence to repeat them to us; so what shall we be the worse for their spite?"

"Ah! so you always say; but I have not your nerves, my dear."

The anxiety to vindicate Miss Stratford, had, for a brief period, withdrawn her kind friend, Mr. Vernon, from the all-engrossing grief that was evidently hurrying him to the grave. But when he saw her fair fame re-established, his thoughts relapsed into their previous sadness, and not even the presence of Selina, much and affectionately as he regarded her, could cheer his drooping spirits. When, however, she proposed again to seek a situation, he so strongly objected to the measure, and declared that her society being now his only consolation, it would be unkind, nay more, cruel of her to leave him to die alone, as he said, that Selina consented to prolong her stay, using every effort in her power to render her sojourn beneath his roof a source of comfort to her benefactor. She read aloud to him, consulted his feeble appetite in the choice of his food, wrote his letters, and was ever near to induce him to enter into conversation, instead of indulging the mournful reminiscences, or moody reveries, into which he was prone to drop. Warmly and deeply did he feel this unceasing care and attention; and often did he regret that fortune had denied him the power to reward it.

With great difficulty Selina got him to consent to see a physician; but the one called in took an opportunity of informing her that his aid was useless, as nothing could retard the progress of the disease, a total breaking up of the constitution, that must soon consign her only friend to the grave.

The friends and neighbours of Mr. Vernon were constant in their visits to him. To the most valued of them he recommended his adopted daughter, as he loved to call her, entreating them to assist her in finding a situation, he, alas! not having the means to enable her to subsist without one.

And now every day marked how rapidly the sick man was sinking; and as the conviction was forced on her who watched over him with filial tenderness, she felt her gratitude and affection increase, and add poignancy to her regret. It was a touching sight to see that young creature bending over the couch of the dying man, watching, with tearful eyes, his already death-like face, and trying to catch his weak and trembling accents. Every hour seemed to threaten to be the last of his mortal career. He no longer recognized those around him, or was conscious when spoken to. Such was the state of affairs when a woman, of most unprepossessing appearance, and vulgar manners, arrived at his house. She was about sixty years of age, corpulent, and unwieldy in person, yet with an activity of mind, and energy of purpose, not often met with. "I am just arrived to see my poor dear cousin," said this person, forcing her way to the bed of the dying man, and applying a handkerchief to her eyes. "Ah!" resumed she, "I see it will all soon be over with him in this world. I must have Mr. Praywell to come to him, and see if he cannot save his poor sinful soul."

Selina looked at this strange intruder with mingled surprise and alarm, and her expressive countenance probably revealed her feelings, for the stranger, throwing herself into the easy chair by the bedside, provided for the accommodation of Selina, stared steadily at her, and, with the air of being perfectly at home, coolly said, "Pray, who are you? I know my cousin, poor man, never had a child. His wife, who was no better than she should be, and turned him against his relations, had none of her own that ever I could hear of; indeed, she was a woman of no family, and he greatly demeaned himself by marrying. I am therefore at a loss to know what claims *you* not being a relative, have to be established here as mistress of the house, and head nurse, as one may say? You 'll excuse my freedom; but it has a mighty strange appearance to see a young, yes, and a pretty looking girl too, living with a man in this sort of way. I, being the next relation to the

poor old man lying there, his first cousin, and heir-at-law to whatever he leaves behind him, have a right to know why you, who are nothing to him, are here, as if you were mistress of the house?"

"I am here by Mr. Vernon's own desire, Madam. His late wife, as well as himself, extended their protection and kindness to me, and for many years have treated me as their adopted child!" and the recollection of the affection of the excellent couple brought tears into the eyes of Selina.

"Adopted child, indeed!" reiterated the rude stranger. "It 's a nice thing for people to be taking to other men's children, when they have kindred of their own. What would Mr. Praywell say to such doings, I should like to know? So here you have been living in clover, on the fat of the land, as one may say," and the speaker glanced around inquiringly at the comfortable chamber; "and all at the expense of a man who is nothing on earth to you, while I, who am his first cousin, have been in want of many, if not all, the comforts I was accustomed to. I declare it 's a burning shame, so it is; and the state he is in," and she pointed to the poor speechless, sightless man, "seems quite a judgment on him!

"Madam, I must request you not to mention his name with disrespect. He was the best, the kindest of men!" and here Selina's words were broken by sobs.

"And I 'll take leave, Miss, to tell you, that as I am his relation, and you are nothing to him, I am not be dictated to. I dare say he might be the kindest of men to *you;* old fools in their dotage generally are, when they fall into the hands of artful and designing young women. But he never showed any kindness to *me*, except two or three times sending me a trifle of money when I wrote to him I was in distress, so I need not be expected to act the hypocrite, and cry my eyes out, like some folk. Now, it 's my opinion, Miss, that if you have any decency left, the best thing you can do is to take yourself off, and leave the dying man to be looked after by his own relation, who is the natural person to close his eyes."

"You must permit me, Madam, to be the best judge of my own conduct," said Selina, with grave dignity; "and, while Mr. Vernon lives, I will not leave him."

"We 'll soon see that when Mr. Praywell comes. Yes, you 'll find out who has a real right to be mistress here."

The female servant, who had entered a few minutes before, having heard the threats of the audacious intruder, whispered Miss Stratford not to mind her, and that she would step off to Mr. Steadfast, and bring him to protect her.

"I 'll have no whisperings or underhand doings here," said the stranger. "My cousin, it is quite clear, has only a few hours to live, and I am the proper and natural person to take charge of him and his property. I 'll have Mr. Praywell to come and attend to his spiritual wants. *He* will arouse the sleeping conscience of the dying sinner, and make him repent his unnatural conduct to his relations, of whom I am the last."

The dying man moaned, and Selina flew to his pillow. The stranger followed her example, as fast as her obesity would permit; and, while Selina bent down to catch his accents, in case he should speak, she, with the voice of a stentor, shouted in his ear, "Cousin, you are dying. Think of your sinful soul, and repent your guilt ere it be too late. It is *I*, Sarah Muckridge, your own first cousin, the only relation you have in the world, who is now speaking to you."

"In pity," said Selina, her voice tremulous from emotion, "do not disturb his last hours."

"What, would you have him die without repentance? rush into the presence of his Maker without having asked *His* pardon? aye, and my pardon too, for his manifold sins; not the least of which was, his neglect of me, and his keeping you here, setting an example of sinfulness, disgraceful to a man of his age."

Again the dying man uttered a faint moan. "He hears me, he hears me," exclaimed Mrs. Muckridge. "You repent your shameful doings, don't you, cousin, and renounce Satan and this young woman, the sharer of your sin?"

Selina shuddered, and became pale as marble; for now for the first time did she comprehend the gross meaning of the speeches of the dreadful woman before her.

"Cousin, I say," resumed Mrs. Muckridge, "your last hour is come. Implore the forgiveness of your offended God, and of man, for the evil example you have given."

These words were spoken in so loud a tone of voice, as to be heard by Mr. Steadfast, who had just entered the hall beneath, and who hastily ascended to the chamber of his friend to interpose between him and the harsh termagant who was

disturbing his last moments. As he entered, Mr. Vernon opened his eyes, fixed them with an expression of unutterable fondness on Selina, who was kneeling by his bedside, then glanced with evident dislike at Mrs. Muckridge, and cast a look of earnest appeal to Mr. Steadfast.

"Sinful man, sinful man!" exclaimed the hardened woman. "See how even at his last hour he looked at the partner of his guilt, with a fondness which proves that his stubborn heart is a stranger to repentance."

The dying man's eye rebuked this speech, and for a moment it was lighted up with intelligence. He endeavoured to speak, but the effort was unavailing, and in a few minutes a loud sigh proclaimed that all was over.

"Go to the Golden Lion round the corner of the street," said Mrs. Muckridge to the female servant, who stood weeping by the bed, "and tell Mr. Praywell to come here immediately."

The servant took no notice of the order, though uttered in a most authoritative tone. "Go, I say," repeated Mrs. Muckridge."

"Pray, Madam, by what right have you intruded here, and disturbed the dying moments of one of the most excellent, the most respected of men?" inquired Mr. Steadfast.

"Before I answer your impertinent question, I must ascertain by what authority you presume to ask it?" replied Mrs. Muckridge, her face red with anger.

"As the executor of my departed friend, and for the present his representative here."

"Oh! if you are his executor that alters the case, and I shall not object to inform you who I am. — My name is Muckridge; I am first cousin and sole relative to the deceased, and as such came here to take care of him, and endeavour in his last hours to make him sensible of his wickedness."

"You must, whatever your degree of relationship to my departed friend may be, know little of his life and character, when you presume to accuse him of wickedness."

"What do you call his having this young woman here?" and she pointed with a contemptuous gesture to Selina: "what right had she to live with him, I should like to know, unless he right of sin?"

"Hold your impious tongue, woman, and shame not the virtuous young creature, who was to him as a daughter, by such foul, such calumnious insinuations."

"I scorn to use insinuations, and assert at once, that as no tie of relationship existed between him and that weeping Magdalen there," pointing at Selina, "she had no right to be here, and would not have taken such an outrageous step, if she had the slightest regard for her character."

"And I assert, that you are a shameless slanderer of the dead and of the living," said Mr. Steadfast; "and I command you at once to leave this house, and not compel me to have the police to expel you."

"Ho! ho! I see how it is. You are the worthy friend and companion of the sinful old fool, who is gone to answer for his wicked doings, and you, I suppose, intend to share the plunder with that virtuous young creature there," and the speaker laid a strong emphasis on the word "virtuous."

Mr. Steadfast left the room, hurried down stairs, and the hall-door was heard to open and close.

"Here, young woman, here's half-a-crown for you, if you will run to the Golden Lion, and tell Mr. Praywell to come here directly."

"I'll do no such thing," replied the servant, indignantly.

Mrs. Muckridge walked to the table, on which was the gold watch of the deceased, with a silver goblet, and turning her back to the bed, close to which knelt the weeping Selina, and stood the servant, she seized the watch and the goblet, concealed both beneath her cloak, and attempted to leave the room, — but the servant had watched her proceedings, and, placing herself before the door, she declared that Mrs. Muckridge should not depart until she had replaced the watch and goblet again on the table. At this moment, a knock at the hall-door announced the return of Mr. Steadfast. Sally, the faithful servant, hurried down to open it, admitted Mr. Steadfast and two of the police who accompanied him, and informed them of the attempt to steal the watch and goblet. They, however, found both those articles on the table, where dread of the police had induced Mrs. Muckridge to replace them; and the police informed her that unless she at once consented to leave the house quietly, they would not only expulse her by force, but arrest her on a charge of rob-

bery. She endeavoured to make them believe that she was falsely accused, and inventet an artful tale, which might, perhaps, have imposed on the police, had they not been so well acquainted with the excellent character, not only of the deceased, but of Mr. Steadfast.

"If no will is found, and I am convinced no *true one* will be forthcoming," said Mrs. Muckridge, "I shall be the rightful heir to all my cousin left behind him."

"You shall be informed when the will is to be opened," replied Mr. Steadfast; "until then, you shall not again enter this house."

Mrs. Steadfast no sooner heard of the death of her worthy neighbour, than she hastened to his house to invite Miss Stratford to her own. All that kindness and sympathy could offer was showered on Selina by the excellent couple, who knew how strong was the attachment entertained for her by the departed and his wife; and how well it was merited. Both now remembered having many years before heard Mr. Vernon mention his having but one relation alive, and that being a very ill-conducted woman, whose frequent demands for money, and violent abuse when it was withheld, had given him great annoyance. This person had not been heard of for some time, and was supposed to have gone to America with an itinerant preacher, whose morals wholly unfitted him for any clerical calling.

Selina refused to leave the house, while it contained the remains of her kind friend, and in order to afford her protection, Mrs. Steadfast came to sleep there. Selina felt as if again left an orphan in a world where she had no friend; and as she looked on the face of the dead, and recalled to memory the kind smile with which it had been wont to welcome her, tears of regret for his loss, mingled with gratitude for his goodness to her, chased each other down her cheeks.

The will, which had been placed by the deceased in the hands of his lawyer, was now to be opened for instructions for his interment. Mrs. Muckridge was apprised of this, and invited to be present at the reading. The whole of the furniture and plate, and a couple of hundred pounds, the fruits of his and his worthy wife's economy, were bequeathed to Selina, and a bequest of twenty pounds to the faithful servant. Mr. Steadfast undertook to dispose of the furniture, which brought

a couple of hundred pounds more, so that, when all the funeral expenses were paid, Selina found herself in possession of three hundred and fifty pounds, with some plain and simple articles of plate, endeared to her by association with the departed friends who bequeathed them, and which she determined nothing short of actual want should ever induce her to part from.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE last sad duties to the dead now over, Selina accepted the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Steadfast to pass some time with them. It cost her many a pang to leave the house where she had received such constant kindness and affection, and as she gave a last look on the little parlour, where some of the most cheerful hours of her life had been passed, she invoked a blessing on the memory of her departed friends.

When a few days were gone by, and that her nerves had recovered from the shock occasioned by the late event, she named to Mrs. Steadfast her desire to find occupation.

"I fear that I can be of little use in procuring you a situation as governess," said that worthy woman; "I have no acquaintances among the class in which a well educated person like you ought to enter. No one thinks of referring to the wife of a simple tradesman like myself for a governess, though I am often asked to recommend a lady's maid or housekeeper. Indeed, no later than yesterday I was applied to for an attendant, to serve a very rich lady."

The thought struck Selina to offer herself for this place. The trials and the discomforts that await governesses, and which she had experienced, had so firmly convinced her that no situation could offer less chance of peace, that she was willing to try whether as *femme de chambre* she might not avoid many of the annoyances that had assailed her in her former position. She expressed her sentiments on this point to Mrs. Steadfast, who rather encouraged than checked the notion, having had occasion to know more than one instance where ladies' maids enjoyed many advantages and comforts seldom extended to governesses.

"If permitted to take my repasts in my own room, or only with a housekeeper," observed Selina, "I should have no

other objection to enter service. To fit myself for it I must take lessons in dress-making, hair-dressing, and getting up laces. I shall soon acquire these essentials to my new calling, for I am quick in learning."

"But with your various accomplishments, my dear Miss Stratford, and your appearance, your manner too, it really grieves me that you should descend in life."

"It depends on one's self, dear Mrs. Steadfast, by the faithful fulfilment of one's duties, to render every situation respectable."

"You are right, I believe. You are wiser than most of your age, and I hope and trust, whatever step you decide on taking, will bring you happiness."

"You will oblige me by writing to the friend who inquired if you knew a lady's maid you could recommend, and in a fortnight, by diligent application, I trust I may be prepared for my new duties."

Mrs. Steadfast did as she was requested, and the next day brought the housekeeper in person to answer the letter. She saw Selina, professed herself charmed with her appearance and manner, declared *sotto voce* to Mrs. Steadfast that Miss Stratford was much more fit to fill the place of a lady than a lady's maid, and said she was sure that Mrs. Fraser, the lady with whom she was to live, would be greatly pleased with her. Mrs. Goodson, (so was the portly housekeeper named,) never accorded the title of mistress to any of the ladies she served, and to the one in whose establishment she now was, she would least of all think of doing so; but, with this pretension and weakness of not recognizing as masters and mistresses those whose wages she received, and whose bread she ate, she was in the main an honest and respectable woman.

"Mrs. Fraser," observed she, "is quite a young and inexperienced per-" — son, she would have said, but she corrected the *lapsus linguæ*, before more than half the word was uttered, and substituted "lady," in its place. "She is extremely well-tempered, and gentle, and her attendant will have little trouble, and may be very happy with her. With Mr. Fraser it is somewhat different — he is old, does not enjoy good health, is rather of a morose disposition, and it is clear has not been used to young people. He has made an immense fortune in India, where he filled some very high legal post,

returned home with ruined health, and committed the folly, for a folly it must surely be considered, to marry a young creature of whom he might be the grandfather. But this is not the worst part of it. Poor Mrs. Fraser, for poor she is, notwithstanding all the gold he lavishes on her, has a mother and sisters in very bad circumstances. She believed, when she married a gentleman of such a disproportionate age, that she might offer a home to her mother and two sisters, on whom she dotes, or, at all events, that he would enable her to provide comfortably for them, and allow her to see them constantly. I believe he led her to think all this, poor young creature, and it was a great shame for him so to impose on her, but when they returned after the honey-moon, he soon let her see the cloven foot. He has given no provision, — so I hear from the valet, — to the mother and her two daughters, who have not enough to enable them, even by pinching themselves of all solid comforts, to keep up an appearance of decency. They are very good persons, and have seen better days, for the father of Mrs. Fraser was a colonel in the army, and a gentleman of good family, and the mother was the daughter of a Dean Everfield, who would have been a bishop if he had lived. So, you see, they are every way respectable."

Such was the extent of the housekeeper's information, who, being of a very communicative disposition, seldom neglected any opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the affairs of her employers, and still more seldom missed any occasion of making them known to others.

We must now make our readers acquainted with the remainder of the history of Mrs. Fraser. Her father's regiment had been sent to India, but he, dreading the effect of the climate for his wife and young children, or, probably, not having the means to defray the heavy expense consequent on such a voyage, left them in England. In India he formed the acquaintance of Mr. Fraser, to whom he often spoke of his wife and children at home. After some years, and just as the poor colonel's regiment was to return to England, and he all joy at the prospect of being restored to his wife and children, he died suddenly, leaving little beside the small pension to which an officer's widow is entitled. When, some three or four years after, Mr. Fraser came home from India, he sought

out the widow of his friend. He found that all his own relations had died, except some remote ones in Scotland, who were poor, and could do him no credit. Friends and acquaintances he had none, save those he had made in India, and who, like himself, had returned to enjoy in England the wealth accumulated there. He became attracted by the beauty of Mrs. Herbert's eldest daughter, and held out hopes that if this poor young creature would bestow her hand on him, he would not only place her in affluence, but provide handsomely for her mother and sisters. This last hope was the inducement that conquered the natural dislike of the poor girl to wed a man old enough to be her grandfather, and of plain appearance and disagreeable manners. Fondly attached to her mother and sisters, and well aware, for she had shared them, of the privations they had to undergo, she determined to secure their comfort by the sacrifice of her own happiness, and wedded Mr. Fraser. Mrs. Herbert's poverty, and consequent seclusion, had broken off nearly all intercourse with former friends and acquaintances, so she had no one to consult on the marriage of her daughter, or to see that a proper settlement was made on her. To stipulate on any allowance to herself, though she was led to believe that she was to receive one, would, in her mind, be like bartering her child for gold; so she never hinted at it, although the prospect of seeing her two younger daughters placed in comfort was a great inducement to her to consent to her beautiful Amy's wedding a disagreeable old man. The nuptials were celebrated; the blooming bride, and yellow, withered bridegroom set off on a tour, without his making even the customary gifts to the two youthful bridesmaids, the Misses Herbert, or offering any assistance to their poor mother. The bride thought that, at the parting moment, a bank note of a large amount would be slipped into the hand of her weeping mother, and this conviction cheered her when depressed by contemplating the yellow, wrinkled face reflected in the front glass of the chariot, every glance at which made her shudder.

The temper of Mr. Fraser, never good, was considerably ruffled on this occasion by having heard an Irish apple-woman, whose stall was near Mrs. Herbert's humble abode at Brompton, exclaim, as he handed his bride into the carriage,

"Ah! there goes a beautiful rosebud tied to a faded old orange-lily, and more's the pity."

Mrs. Herbert grew pale when she remembered how large a portion of the sum meant to support her and her two daughters for the next half year, had been spent in providing a few indispensable articles of clothing for the bride. Mr. Fraser had sent no *trousseau*, no *corbeille*, well as he knew the inability of Mrs. Herbert to provide either, and she was too delicate to hint a word on the subject. She had, therefore, bought some linen, and a few dresses, more suitable to the position her daughter was henceforth to fill than in accordance with her own very limited means; and now she found herself much worse off than ever, and trembled as she looked on her weeping girls, who could not, for some hours, be consoled when they saw the vacant place of that dear and gentle sister, who had never before quitted them. The alarmed mother recalled to mind how, when she had ventured to recommend a maid for her daughter, Mr. Fraser desired her not to trouble herself, for he had provided one, who would meet his wife at the place they were to stop at for the night the day they should leave Town. She thought, at the moment, that the arrangement was a strange and ungracious one; but it had occurred to her that, probably, Mr. Fraser might not wish the servant of his wife to see the humble abode whence he took her, and that, until she and her daughters were placed by him in one more consonant to the position her married daughter was to hold, he wished to avoid any persons of his establishment coming to the little cottage at Brompton. But when day after day passed without bringing her a line from her child, that child of whose attachment she could not, for a moment, entertain a doubt, and of whose whereabouts she would have remained in total ignorance, had not the "Morning Post" announced the fact that the *millionnaire* Mr. Fraser and his lovely bride were arrived at Cheltenham — that conservatory for returned Indians with diseased livers. She instantly wrote a letter to Mrs. Fraser, and waited, in an agony of suspense, for an answer. But she waited in vain; and then she bethought herself of writing to Mr. Fraser. But even the pain of suspense was less bitter to be borne than the fearful truth that broke on her mind when his answer arrived. The following lines were the whole contents of the letter: —

"Madam, — Mrs. Fraser did not receive your favour, for at her age I think it incumbent on me to open and read all letters addressed to her, consequently yours came to my hands; and I will be plain with you, — I have deemed it expedient that she should not see it. When I married your daughter, and relieved you from the expense of her board, lodging, and clothing, which, in your confined circumstances, must be a great saving, I never contemplated encumbering myself with you, or your two daughters. The position which my wife will fill is so widely different to yours, that an intercourse between you could only bring painful comparisons to the minds of both parties. This is to be avoided, more especially as Mrs. Fraser's undue sensibility, foolishly, I must say, allowed by you to become morbid, would, if encouraged, either by personal intercourse or correspondence, be likely to impair her health, or, at all events, interfere with my comfort.

"I remain, Madam, your obedient Servant,

"JAMES FRASER."

The grief of the mother and sisters at finding themselves denied the happiness of seeing her so dear to them, may easily be imagined. The separation tortured them, and well did they know the effect it would produce on the unfortunate young creature, who had, they felt convinced, formed this ill-assorted union, more with a view to the advantages *they* might derive from it, than from any ambitious wishes of her own. *They* could talk of the dear absent one, could dwell on her perfections, and they were manifold, and there was some faint consolation even in this. But she — she had no one to whom she could speak of that loved, though humble, home; of that dear and affectionate mother, and those beloved sisters, whom it was agony to leave, even when cheered by the delusive hope of beholding them again in a few weeks. What a solitude of the heart must hers be, with a harsh and stern old man, as they now, too late, discovered Mr. Fraser to be; and their own grief was absorbed in pity and sympathy for her.

Such was the state of affairs in the mansion in which Selina Stratford was to make her *début* in the humble position of *Femme de Chambre*. To serve so gentle and unfortunate a being as Mrs. Fraser was represented to be, was more consonant with her wishes than an entrance into the family of a

lady of fashion; and when, the following day, she presented herself in Grosvenor-square, and was admitted to the presence of the youthful wife, her touching beauty, the pensive expression of her countenance, and the low, sweet sound of her voice, excited the liveliest interest in the breast of Selina. Mr. Fraser was present at the interview, and his appearance fully justified the prejudice Selina had imbibed against him. He examined her attentively, demanded her age, family, and where she had previously served. When told she had never been a *femme de chambre* before, he expressed his satisfaction, saying that he peculiarly wished to have a person who had not held the situation in any other family, although he expected her to be able to fulfil the functions. "Mrs. Fraser is so very young and inexperienced," added the stern old man, "that you will refer to me before you obey any of her orders that are at all out of the ordinary routine, by which I mean, you are never to deliver or receive letters or notes, to or from her. You are never to admit visitors to her dressing-room, however nearly related to her they may be, or to convey messages."

Selina stole a glance at the fair young creature before her, whose face, one moment covered with blushes, was the next as pale as marble. Tears trembled in her downcast eyes, and the movement of the white drapery that covered her delicate bust revealed the agitation of the heart that throbbed beneath it.

Mr. Fraser was a singularly plain man. Age had left its searing marks on a low and retreating forehead, crossed by deep lines, eyes dim, and bordered by lids of a crimson hue, which rendered the dingy yellow tint of the whole face still more striking by the contrast, reminding one of a yellow tulip, with a few streaks of red on it. A black wig, of so juvenile a fashion as to represent the hair of a dandy of twenty, increased the disagreeable effect produced by the whole countenance; and the extreme foppishness of his dress attracted more attention to the gaunt and ill-formed figure, whose defects it by no means concealed. False whiskers, attached to the wig, and adhering to the yellow cheeks through the medium of gum, and teeth, "few and far between," revealed whenever their owner spoke, completed as revolting a face as ever Selina looked upon. To glance from this disagreeable object to the fair creature who bore his

name, ay, and had to bear with it the frequent ebullitions of a temper never good, but now soured by age, ill health, and evil passions, was quite sufficient to make her feel disgust for one, and deep pity for the other.

Mrs. Fraser was remarkably beautiful. Faultless in features, and with a fairness of complexion seldom seen, hair dark as the raven's wing, and eyes of a deep blue, with a charming mouth and teeth, it was impossible to see a more lovely creature. Her figure was tall and slender, yet not deficient in that roundness of *contour* which gives feminine beauty its finishing touch, and her feet and hands were of extreme delicacy.

"And what situation have you hitherto held?" demanded Mr. Fraser, with the air of an inquisitor.

"That of a nursery governess," replied Selina, wishing to conceal that she was capable of being a governess to young people more advanced in years, lest the discovery might militate against her being engaged in so subordinate a one as that for which she now offered herself.

"A nursery governess," repeated he, "so much the better, for you can serve as a sort of companion to Mrs. Fraser, as well as lady's maid, and this will be agreeable to me when I am forced to absent myself from home, as I have a peculiar objection to her being left alone."

Again Mrs. Fraser's cheeks became suffused with blushes, and tears filled her eyes; but if either of these emotions were noticed by her unfeeling husband, he said or did nothing to denote the slightest contrition for having occasioned these symptoms of discomposure.

Selina prepared to depart, and her movement recalled Mr. Fraser from the moody state of abstraction into which he seemed to have fallen for the last few minutes. "We have not as yet spoken of wages," said he, and the word grated harshly on the ear of Selina, "what do you demand?"

"Forty pounds a year."

"Forty pounds! that is a very large sum. I should have thought twenty-five pounds a year quite sufficient. The present maid of Mrs. Fraser has only that sum."

"For a person who is to act as companion as well as lady's maid, a less sum than the one I have named, Sir, would not enable me to make a suitable appearance. I must also premise

that I cannot consent to take my meals with the servants; with the housekeeper I have no objection, but it would not suit me to dine in the servants' hall."

"Humph," said Mr. Fraser; "well, well, this won't make any great difference — you may have your meals served in your own room. Of course your tea, sugar, and washing are included in the 40*l.*, and your beer money too."

"Yes, Sir," replied Selina, anxious to get over this part of the affair, and heartily disgusted with the sordidness of the *millionnaire*.

The situation was so very untempting, that she was much disposed at once to decline it; but the pensive countenance of the fair young wife appealed so strongly to her sympathy, that her desire to soothe, if not to ameliorate her position, triumphed over the distaste she had conceived against becoming a dependent on the gloomy and irascible Mr. Fraser. The countenance of his poor wife, too, had no inconsiderable influence on the decision of Selina. Her mild expression, and lady-like demeanour, so different from the pert self-sufficiency, or servile submission appertaining to the general class of *suivantes*, had greatly impressed Mrs. Fraser in her favour; the purity of her diction, the agreeable tone of her voice, and her personal attractions also, had their due weight in winning the good will of the youthful and unhappy wife. There is, whatever some persons may assert to the contrary, a sympathy, a sort of freemasonry in beauty, and particularly in that species of it which consists in an expression of goodness, that draws those who possess it towards each other. Both women, in the present instance, were conscious of this magnetic effect, and felt predisposed to become friends; and when Selina closed her agreement with Mr. Fraser, his wife longed to tell her how much gratified she felt by the arrangement. Mrs. Buxton was to be written to, and Mrs. Steadfast was to be seen, relative to the character of Miss Stratford, and if the result proved satisfactory, Selina was to enter her new position.

She withdrew, and left Mrs. Fraser most desirous that she should soon return.

"She is too pretty, but that can't be helped," soliloquized Mr. Fraser, "and may after all prove advantageous. Handsome women are always jealous of each other, and envy in this

case will be added to that passion; for how can this very good-looking girl see the riches and splendour that surround my wife without being envious? This will render her a willing spy over Amy, and make her carefully obey my instructions."

So reasoned the obtuse nabob, and so reason many of his sex, who believe they comprehend women, because they judge by a few of the unworthy specimens of the sex that may have fallen in their way, and who, thinking that the beauty of other women detracts from their own, are disposed to dislike and malign them.

In due time the answer arrived from Mrs. Buxton, who, haunted by remorse at having believed aught to the prejudice of Selina, had, ever since the proofs of her innocence had been furnished, longed for an opportunity to make atonement to her, and gladly seized this one. Every eulogium that good feeling could convey, was lavished on Miss Stratford by the good-natured but weak-minded woman, who missed her society every day, yet had not moral courage sufficient to entreat her return, lest such a measure might be offensive to her noble neighbours. Mrs. Steadfast gave an equally high character of Miss Stratford, and Mr. Fraser, being now fully satisfied of her merits, wrote to request she would enter his establishment as soon as possible. The arrangements for her reception far surpassed her expectations. They were not only comfortable, but even elegant, for Mr. Fraser, reasoning like a selfish and cunning man, determined, by making Selina's position as comfortable as possible, to attach her to it, and render her willing to do all his behests rather than risk losing it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

When left alone with her gentle mistress, her timidity and embarrassment pained, while they filled with pity, the heart of Selina. Like a beautiful bird in a gilded cage, pining for freedom, and loathing its gorgeous prison, sate this fair young creature, insensible to the splendour around her, or only remembering it as the badge of the slavery which gladly would she escape from. From the first moment of her entering the house, Mrs. Fraser treated Selina not as a dependent or inferior, but as an equal, or rather as a friend. She, with the in-

tuitive quickness of her sex, at once perceived that Selina was more suited to be her companion than servant. When Selina offered to dress her beautiful hair, the fair Amy said, "I really feel ashamed to allow you, Miss Stratford, to perform any menial service for me. You shall arrange my hair, if you, in return, will permit me to dress yours."

This artless delicacy pleased Selina, who could so well appreciate it; but with a gentle firmness, acquired by the knowledge of the world gained within the last year or two, she taught Mrs. Fraser to comprehend that the relative positions of mistress and *femme de chambre* must not be lost sight of between them. When the duties of the toilette were over, Mrs. Fraser would entreat her to read aloud to her, to play and sing to her, or to place her easel, or embroidery-frame, near to her own, and converse while they drew or worked. Often would deep sighs burst from the heart of this young creature, and tears drop from her eyes; and she would cast an imploring look at Selina, which said, as plain as ever glance spoke, "Why don't you ask me the cause of my sighs and tears?"

But Selina, though most anxious to contribute to the comfort of her amiable mistress, was by no means desirous to possess her confidence, fearful that she might, in that case, be expected to be made the medium of communication between her and those dear relatives, whose cruel separation from her caused, she felt assured, the emotions she so frequently witnessed. It was no selfish dread of losing her position, that influenced Selina to avoid eliciting or encouraging the confidence of Mrs. Fraser. She feared that that amiable young person's already painful situation would be rendered still more so, by her harsh and stern husband, should he discover, that, in spite of his interdiction, she had held any communication with her mother and sisters, and this dread weighed on her mind, and induced her to endeavour to change the subject whenever, as was frequently the case, Mrs. Fraser was leading to it. Painful was it to Selina to witness the expression of keen disappointment that clouded the fair face of her gentle mistress on these occasions; yet when, as was his custom, Mr. Fraser entered the dressing-room abruptly, without even knocking at the door, and examined the countenances of his wife and herself, as if he suspected they were carrying on some secret plot, she rejoiced that *she* could meet

his searching glance undismayed, and that his scrutiny all over the chamber, in order to discover something to justify his suspicions, was fruitless. The most jealous husband could not betray more anxiety or ingenuity to detect some clue to a love affair, by which his honour and peace would be compromised, than did this self-tormentor, to find out whether his innocent and unhappy wife kept up any communication with her family. When her cheek grew pale, and her eyes betrayed that sleep was a stranger to them, he would send off for the most eminent physician, to whom he would state his fears for her health, which he declared was dearer to him than life; and, for the next three or four days, he would watch her countenance with all the trembling dread with which a fond mother examines that of her only child. "There must be some dangerous malady preying on her," would he say, in answer to the physician's assertion, that *he* saw only a delicacy of structure, requiring care, and an extreme sensibility.

"Avoidance of exposure to the night air, and a peculiar attention to preserve the young lady from all causes of mental anxiety, are all that are required; and with these your daughter will do well," would every new doctor consulted declare; for, dissatisfied with each, a fresh one was called in every time that his fears were excited. Perhaps his anger, at having his youthful wife always mistaken for his daughter, had something to do in his invariably consulting a new physician, and as each repeated nearly the same words, he had no confidence in any of them. "What cause for anxiety *can* she have?" would he say to the medical adviser. "I have the means, and the desire, to gratify the most extravagant wishes. Could she eat gold she might have it; and her jewels surpass those of the proudest of our aristocracy."

"Riches do not always bestow happiness, Sir," would be the reply. "Mrs. Fraser is very young; perhaps the want of companions of her own age may have engendered the melancholy which her countenance reveals."

"But she has a companion, a youthful one, too, who plays and sings to her, who, in short, devotes herself wholly to her amusement."

"A hired one, probably."

"Yes; but a very accomplished one, and very gentle and sweet-tempered, as my wife tells me."

"With so plain, so aged, and so stern a husband as you," thought the physician, "it can hardly be wondered at, that the poor young creature is low-spirited. How many have I seen fade, droop, and die, under similar circumstances!"

But though each of the medical men called in had formed the same opinion, none had given utterance to this last reflection; and Mr. Fraser was left to dwell on the probable cause of his wife's altered looks, and constant sadness, namely his own harsh conduct, in having torn asunder those ties with which her peace, nay, her very life was bound up. But although his conscience frequently whispered this cause, and that he could not silence its murmurs, he was obstinately bent on not following its dictates — no, not even to see the roses of health bloom on her cheek again, and her eyes resume their lustre, would he consent to her renewing her intercourse with her family. Much as he liked her — and he did love her as much as it was in his selfish nature to love aught save self, her sweetness of temper and gentleness having rivetted the affection her beauty had excited, — he would have preferred seeing her sink into a premature grave, rather than behold her lavishing on her mother and sisters that tenderness, the demonstrations of which, previous to his marriage, had frequently awakened his jealousy and envy; and which he felt never would be showered on himself.

In vain did he bestow on her the most costly gifts, procure for her delicate appetite the rarest dainties, and fill her splendid conservatory with the choicest flowers — all these proofs of attention were received with a faint smile and a few gracious words, but it was evident they afforded her no pleasure. Then would he accuse her of ingratitude, declare that half the fine things he had heaped on her would have rendered any reasonable woman in the world happy, and that he was the most unfortunate man on earth, in having a wife whom all his exertions could not make even cheerful. Sometimes his timid victim would endeavour to lead to the forbidden subject of what could restore her cheerfulness; though happiness, she felt, with him, would be out of the question, for a personal distaste, imbibed from the very commencement of their acquaintance, and greatly strengthened by his cruelty in separating her from those dear ones for whose sakes she had sacrificed herself, rendered his presence irksome to her, and even

his attentions odious. Nevertheless, a sense of the respect due to a husband, and to one, too, old enough to be her grandfather, so far influenced her manner, that, although loathing his person, and shrinking with disgust from even an approach to familiarity on his part, she invariably treated him with gentleness and deference. The only relief she experienced from the sadness that was now becoming habitual to her, was, when he was absent from home; then would she retire to her dressing-room or boudoir, and, *tête-à-tête* with Selina, engaged in reading or conversing, forget for a brief time her unhappiness. As she got to know Selina better, her regard for her rapidly increased; and as Selina discovered the sweetness of temper, innocence, and candour of her youthful mistress's character, her affection and esteem for her augmented. Mrs. Fraser would question her on the events of her life, not from a motive of idle curiosity, but from a real interest in her; and Selina would disclose to her passages in her short but troubled life, which greatly touched the feelings of the excellent young creature.

"You were too young to be sensible of a mother's love, to have missed her tender care," would Mrs. Fraser reply; "you think of her as blessed in a better world, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; but if you knew the anguish of being separated from the dearest, fondest mother that ever lived, every recollection of whom is mingled with some mark of tenderness, some proof of self-abnegation, to be found only in a mother's heart, how would you pity me. But to know that she is within a distance that might be passed in an hour, that in an hour I might be clasped to that dear heart whence I drew my nurture when an infant, on wich my head was so often pillowed to sleep, yet to be as wholly severed from her, as if seas rolled between us; to be denied even the comfort of hearing from her, or of writing to her, oh! this indeed is misery;" and tears would stop her utterance. Then would she resume: "To be separated from sisters, dear, fond sisters, who shared every thought, who lightened, by sharing, every care; to advance whose interests, as well as to secure comfort for a dear mother, too long deprived of it, the sacrifice of all one's own feelings was made, and to find it made in vain! Oh, how hard is it to bear! and can it be wondered at that health sinks under such trials? I would have been so

grateful, too, for any kindness shown to those so dear to me. I would conquer the distaste that, in spite of every effort to resist it, daily increases towards him. I have vowed at the altar to love, honour, and obey — gratitude would have supplied the place of a more tender sentiment; yes, I would have been his servant, his slave, anything, to prove my gratitude, my devotion to him."

Frequently would Mr. Fraser send for Selina, and question her: "Your Mistress," would he say, "appeared agitated yesterday, when I entered the dressing-room; what was the cause?"

"Mrs. Fraser's health and spirits suffer, I think, Sir, from the seclusion in which she lives."

"Do you think that occasional visits to the theatres would amuse her?"

"No, Sir. I do not believe she likes public amusements."

"Then what do you think is the cause of her low spirits? With all that wealth can purchase, what can she want?"

"If I may take the liberty of telling you my opinion, Sir, I should say she pines for an intercourse with her relations."

"Which she shall never have," interrupted Mr. Fraser; "no, sooner would I behold her die, than yield to her wishes on this point. Yes, sooner would I see her borne to her grave, although she is the sole object on earth dear to me, than witness the demonstrations of her affection lavished on those I hate; yes, on those I abhor, because they have engrossed all her tenderness."

Then, as if angry with himself for having revealed his hardness of heart, he would tell Selina to be gone, and menace her with instant dismissal if she ever betrayed a word he said to her to her mistress. At other times he would offer her bribes, if she would undertake to reason with Mrs. Fraser, and to tell her that when women married they seldom saw much of their mothers or sisters after; that it was childishness and folly to pine at being separated from them; and that hundreds of ladies, young, beautiful, and of high birth, would deem themselves happy to be his wife, and possess the treasures he had lavished on her.

When Selina pleaded, that it would be vain to address such arguments to one whose affections were so deeply en-

gaged, he would fly into a rage, and dismiss her from his presence, saying, she was almost as foolish as her mistress.

Nevertheless, blind, obstinate, and hard-hearted as was this selfish old man, he had conceived a good opinion of Selina, and had so much more confidence in her than in any other person, that he would have been sorry to see her leave his house.

Day by day the cheek of Mrs. Fraser became paler, her form more attenuated, and her langour increased. She was now reduced to a state of such weakness as to be unable to leave her sofa; and Selina, who marked with deep regret the progress of her decline, watched over her with unceasing care.

The prolonged illness of the wife of the *millionnaire*, — a lady, too, whose beauty, no less than whose splendid equipages and magnificent diamonds, had been the means of drawing public attention to the old nabob as well as to herself, could not long be kept a secret. The newspapers announced the fact, in the set phrases of regret generally employed on similar occasions; and the door of Mr. Fraser was daily besieged by inquirers after the health of the invalid. The physicians called in had various consultations. There was a frequent pulling out of gold watches; sundry sapient shakes of the head, and differences of opinion, not only as to the malady, its cause, seat, probable duration, and termination, but also as to the treatment to be pursued; each inclining to some pet system of his own, yet all agreeing on one point, namely, that if Mrs. Fraser did not get better, she must get worse — a fact that even the most ignorant of her domestics might have discovered without a medical consultation.

The fatigue to which Selina was exposed, seldom leaving the chamber of her mistress, and sitting up night after night by her bedside, had such an effect on her own health, that one of the doctors, having noticed her altered looks, desired that a nurse should be called in to relieve her, by taking her place at night by the pillow of their patient. This doctor, a humane and worthy man, had become greatly interested in the state of Mrs. Fraser; and her husband, tortured by the dread of losing her, felt more disposed to adopt his advice than that of any of the other physicians. When, therefore,

Doctor Percy insisted on the necessity of a nurse being called in, and stated that he knew one whom he could recommend as an intelligent and trustworthy person, Mr. Fraser gave permission to have her sent, and a few hours after she made her appearance. Selina was alone present when she entered, and was instantly struck by the trepidation evident in her manner. Her hand shook, her lips trembled, and there was an agitation in her whole manner, in spite of every effort to conceal it, that arrested Selina's attention. "You seem ill," whispered she.

"No, Madam, only the effect of having ascended the stairs too rapidly. The palpitation will subside in a moment."

Mrs. Fraser was asleep, and often murmured the names of her mother and sisters. Each time that she did so, the nurse trembled, and turned pale as death, and Selina observed that she turned away her head, and stealthily applied her handkerchief to her eyes. There was a nervousness in all her movements, a suppressed agitation, that it was evident she sought to subdue and conceal, but which, nevertheless, manifested itself in various ways. When Mr. Fraser entered the sick chamber the nurse seemed to make a strong effort to recover her self-control. Although the curtains were drawn, and only a very feeble light admitted in the room, she avoided, as much as possible, coming near him. "You are the nurse sent by Dr. Percy?" said he, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Yes, Sir," was the reply, accompanied by a respectful curtsey.

Selina noticed that these two monosyllables were uttered by the nurse in a totally different tone of voice to that in which she had spoken to her. The bearing, and manner, too, of the nurse were different. Previous to Mr. Fraser's entrance, although agitated, there was an unmistakable air and demeanour of a gentlewoman about the woman, while now she appeared to affect the air and manner of the generality of persons of her class.

"Have you had much experience in your calling?" inquired Mr. Fraser.

"Yes, Sir, a good deal; and Dr. Percy halways *be's* so good as to recommend me, in cases where he is very hanxious about his patient."

Mr. Fraser drew back the curtain to look on the sleeper,

the nurse standing behind him; and Selina saw the woman shudder, and turn pale as death, as she caught a view of the invalid. She seemed ready to sink to the earth, for a moment; but when Mr. Fraser let the curtain fall, and turned to speak to her, she had conquered her feelings, and assumed a look of stolid indifference.

"Don't allow any one to enter this room, except the doctors and Miss Stratford," said Mr. Fraser; "and remember that, when Miss Stratford is out of the room, you must never allow a note, nor a message, to be delivered to Mrs. Fraser, nor from her, under penalty of my severest displeasure."

"I will be sure to hattend to your horders, Sir," was the answer, accompanied by another low curtsey; and he left the room.

No sooner had he disappeared, than the nurse sank into a chair, gasping for breath, and trembling violently. Selina poured her out a glass of water, and raised it to her lips, and when a portion of it had been swallowed, the nurse seemed revived, and gave her an eloquent glance of gratitude, with a few whispered words of thanks, uttered in such correct phraseology, and so wholly free from the vulgar addition and aspiration of the letter *h*, as to convince her that, when speaking to Mr. Fraser, the nurse had not spoken in her natural voice or manner. Selina also observed, that, although she was a woman of much more than ordinary obesity, her movements were so light, that they could hardly be heard. Her hands, too, were wonderfully small, as compared to the large figure to which they appertained, and the spectacles she wore could not prevent Selina from noticing that her eyes did not look as if they required their aid.

When Mrs. Fraser awoke, Selina informed her that the nurse, recommended by Dr. Percy, was present.

"I am glad," replied she, "for you, dear Miss Stratford, may now have a night's rest, of which I am sure you stand greatly in need. Nurse, be so good as to give me a little barley-water."

Selina had kept her eye on the nurse while Mrs. Fraser spoke, and observed that she was again greatly agitated. It was, however, evident that the feelings under which she now was influenced were of a different kind to the former ones; for tears rushed to her eyes, and she was compelled to remove

her spectacles to wipe them off, before she could pour out the barley-water, and present it to the invalid.

Mrs. Fraser looked at her for a moment, took the glass from her hand, and said, "You tremble. Are you ill?"

"No, Madam, thank you, I am only a little flurried, for the moment, at coming into a strange place."

The same voice was assumed in speaking to Mrs. Fraser, as when answering her husband's questions, but this time the letter *h* was omitted to be added to the words to which it had previously been joined.

"Poor woman, she is so large, that moving about must indeed flurry her," observed Mrs. Fraser, in French, to Selina. "Arrange my pillow, nurse, it is not comfortable," said Mrs. Fraser.

Selina, seeing that the nurse's agitation still continued, approached the bed to arrange the pillow.

"No, dear, good Selina, you must let nurse do it, that I may get accustomed to her mode of managing it, otherwise I shall miss you too much when you are taking your needful rest."

"Indeed I do not require more rest, dear Madam," replied Selina, "and do not like to resign my post."

"But I must not grow so selfish as to allow you to injure your health through your anxiety to save mine."

The nurse cast a look so full of gratitude towards Selina, that the latter became more convinced than ever that the person before her took no common interest in the invalid; and a gleam of *who* she might possibly be flushed through her mind. The nurse now approached the bed, raised Mrs. Fraser gently in her arms, supported her on her left, while with her right she moved the pillows, and smoothed them, and then placed the invalid in an easy posture.

"Thanks, good nurse, how comfortable you have made me! You must not be jealous, dear Selina, but I really never have had my pillows so nicely arranged, or felt myself so tenderly, so gently moved in my bed, since my own darling mother used to smoothe them, and move me when I was ill."

The nurse trembled so violently, that Mrs. Fraser, although she was concealed from her by the curtain, became conscious of her emotion. "Do, Selina, ring the bell, and

order a glass of wine for nurse; she requires it, I am quite sure, she is so very nervous."

"If you will permit me to leave the room for a few minutes, I shall quite recover, Madam," said the nurse, who then quickly glided away, opening and closing the door so softly as scarcely to be heard.

"It is very strange, Selina, but I who dislike fat and flaxen-haired people, and persons who wear spectacles, all which prejudices I know to be very foolish, cannot help feeling drawn towards this strange nurse, who has all these imperfections. There is something nice in the sound of her voice, which recalls some one very dear to me to my mind; and had I closed my eyes, or not looked at her, I could have fancied that I was resting on my darling mother's arm, when she supported me. Yes, I feel I shall like her, though she does look very disagreeable, with her profusion of flaxen curls, her spectacles, and her great unwieldy form."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The reflections of Mrs. Fraser made so strong an impression on Selina, that they almost confirmed the suspicions she had previously formed, that the nurse was other than what she assumed to be. What if she were actually the mother of Mrs. Fraser, and had sought access to her child by the only means in her power, and had disguised herself to avoid detection? Yes, it must be so. How else could her agitation, her altered voice and manner when speaking to Mr. Fraser, and her tears, be accounted for? Selina felt her heart filled with pity for the mother, thus compelled to travesty herself, and act the part of a mercenary nurse to her own child, at the risk that if a detection took place, she would be expulsed with insult from the house, by the hard-hearted and relentless tyrant, who, by keeping her daughter from her and her sisters, had reduced her to the helpless state in which she was now placed. She determined to do all in her power to render the position of Mrs. Herbert as little painful as possible, by screening her from the watchful scrutiny of Mr. Fraser, and attending to her comforts.

"Illness is apt, by weakening the nerves, to engender many strange fancies," observed Mrs. Fraser, after a long

silence; "do you know, Selina, that when I felt the quick pulsations of the nurse's heart, and the gentle touches of her smooth soft hand, I was so reminded of my mother, that tears came into my eyes, and I looked in her face in search of a likeness. But I believe it is not an unusual thing, when all one's thoughts are filled by one object, to look for a resemblance; nay more, to fancy one has found it, in another's face. When I used to drive in the streets when I came back after my marriage, I used to gaze at every woman accompanied by two nice-looking girls I saw, thinking that they might be my dear mother and sisters, and I used to fancy I traced resemblances to them. Now there is positively something about the mouth and teeth of this nurse, that greatly reminds me of my darling mother's; I wish she had raven-black hair, and not those flaxen locks, and then the likeness would be stronger. My mother is very slight, and has such a *distingué* air, and then her face is very fair and delicate, while nurse's is coarse and red; but I am a fool, am I not, Selina, to indulge in such fancies?"

As the evening wore away, the nurse became more composed. She was evidently either of a very taciturn nature, a peculiarity seldom to be met with in persons of her profession, or else she was fearful of her voice being recognised, and Selina was disposed to accept the latter hypothesis. She never spoke but when addressed, and then replied as briefly as possible. Yet there were moments when her countenance lighted up, and words seemed hovering on her lips; but she checked them, and remained absorbed in thought, her eyes constantly fixed on the bed, and her ear catching every sound that proceeded from it. Did the invalid betray the slightest symptom of restlessness, the nurse was instantly by her bedside, ready to move her, and smoothe her pillow; and never did she fulfil these duties of her calling without Mrs. Fraser's expressing her satisfaction at the mode in which it was done, as also remarking how much it reminded her of her mother. Such allusions never failed to produce a visible effect on the nurse, notwithstanding her endeavours to conceal it.

It had been agreed, that Selina was to fill the place of nurse during the day, while the latter slept; and during the night nurse was to remain with the invalid. This arrangement appeared to satisfy Mrs. Norman, (so was the nurse named;)

and Selina could not help thinking that her satisfaction was caused by this arrangement keeping her out of sight of Mr. Fraser, whose presence always flurried and alarmed her. When Doctor Percy paid his daily visits, he several times expressed a desire to see the nurse; but, when told by Selina that she was asleep, he forbore to urge it. One night Selina heard, or fancied she heard, a noise in the chamber of Mrs. Fraser, which was at no great distance from her own, and fearful that some change for the worse had occurred, she arose, and with stealthy steps entered it. Mrs. Norman was on her knees, praying by the bedside, tears streaming down her cheeks, and an expression of such acute anguish on her countenance — that countenance now more exposed by the spectacles having been removed, that scarcely a doubt of the justice of her suspicions remained in the mind of Selina. Mrs. Norman started in evident alarm, the moment she became sensible of the entrance of some person in the room. She arose from her kneeling posture, snatched up her spectacles, and hastily put them on. When, however, she saw that the intruder was Selina, her alarm seemed to diminish, and she gradually recovered her self-possession. In a few minutes after Selina's entrance, Mrs. Fraser sighed heavily, and murmured audibly, "Mother, dear, dear mother, come to me!"

The nurse started from her chair, flew, rather than ran, to the bedside, opened the curtain, and bent over the sleeper, who, awakened by the movement, yet still not sufficiently so to have resumed consciousness, flung her arms around the neck of Mrs. Norman, pressed her passionately to her breast, exclaiming, "Mother, darling mother, you are come to me at last."

Quite overcome by this surprise, the nurse sank fainting on the bed. Selina ran to her assistance, and Mrs. Fraser, now perfectly awake, sat up, and looked anxiously at the poor woman, who, utterly insensible, gave no symptom of life, save a slight pulsation of the heart. Selina bathed her temples with cold water; and, to be enabled to do it more effectually, removed the mass of light curls that covered her brow. In the operation the false hair fell off, as well as the cap, and the natural hair, of a shining black, besprent with grey, stood revealed.

"My mother! oh, my dear, dear mother!" exclaimed Mrs.

Fraser, "my heart told me it was you!" and, bursting into a passionate fit of tears, she fondly embraced her parent.

"Fly, fly to the door, Selina," said she, "and lock it securely. We shall be lost, should Mr. Fraser discover that she is here."

The injunction was rapidly performed; and now Selina, anxious to relieve Mrs. Herbert, opened her dress and unlaced her corset, when she found that, instead of the very large woman the pretended nurse had appeared to be, she was, in reality, a slight person enveloped in several wadded dresses. The exertions of Selina to restore the suspended animation of Mrs. Herbert, were not crowned with success for half an hour. She then opened her eyes, looked around, as if awaking from a dream, when meeting the love-beaming eyes of her daughter, filled with tears of affection, fixed on her face, she became conscious of what was passing around her.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to describe the scene that ensued. Pressed in each other's arms, the mother and daughter mingled their tears and embraces, looked in each other's faces again and again, as if they would note the ravages made by sorrow at their separation.

"My child, my precious child, how you are changed since I parted from you, blooming in health!" said Mrs. Herbert, in accents so full of sadness, that they went right to the hearts of her hearers; Selina being scarcely less moved than Mrs. Fraser.

"And you, my dear, my blessed mother, how pale, how thin you have grown! There were no white locks amid the dark ones I used to be so proud of when I left you!" and the daughter pressed the dishevelled tresses of her mother to her lips. "But we will part no more, dearest mother. You will take me to my old home, to my sisters, will you not? Oh, I have been so wretched without you and them, that I prayed for death!"

How did the tears flow down the pale cheeks of Mrs. Herbert, as she listened to the artless words of her child; and felt her own helplessness to comply with the touching appeal addressed to her!

"You do not answer me, dearest mother! Why do you not speak; why not promise that you will take me with you, to dwell for evermore in my old, my happy home? You know

not how I hate all the splendour that surrounds me. It only reminds me how dearly it has been purchased — purchased by our separation!"

The agony of the mother is not to be described, while revealing to her innocent daughter, a creature wholly ignorant of the world and its laws, that the day, the fatal day that saw her bestow her hand on Mr. Fraser, deprived her parent of all right or power to remove her from his control.

"Almighty God!" exclaimed Mrs. Fraser, "am I then doomed to be his slave for ever! Must I drag on the chain that galls me, that preys on my very life, and endure to pass the remnant of it away from you, from my sisters? No, no, death would be a thousand times preferable!" and here, exhausted by her emotion, the poor young creature fell back on her pillow.

"We must not give way to despair, my precious darling! Mr. Fraser may yet be moved to pity, and consent that you should see us. When he is made aware that your illness has been occasioned by the separation from me, from your sisters, he *will not*, no, he *cannot* refuse to let us meet, yes frequently meet, and write to each other. You will tell him this, darling, and pray him to consent to your wishes. He loves you, it cannot be otherwise; and he will not refuse that on which your happiness — your health depends!"

"Mother, you know him not. Could you believe that I had given way to despair, until I had tried every means to bend his cold and stubborn heart? I have prayed to him, on my knees I have prayed; I have covered his feet with my tears, as an abject slave before her tyrant master, to be allowed to see you, or even to write to or to hear from you; but I knelt and prayed in vain. He will never relent; and nought remains for me but death, to free me from this cruel bondage. Finding him deaf to my entreaties, I tried to move him by a patient submission to his will; I dried my tears whenever I heard his step, and I importuned him no more; but all, all was unavailing. He believes that, while he lavishes gold and all the gaudy trappings of wealth about me; while he heaps the most costly pearls and diamonds on me, I have no cause to be unhappy; and that, while he calls in a host of physicians to minister to my ruined health, leaving my tortured heart

to prey on this weak frame, he has nothing to reproach himself with."

Well and truly had the artless and wretched wife revealed the nature of her stern husband. The disclosure agonized her fond mother, whose worst thoughts of the man who had torn her child from her, who would rudely burst asunder the bonds of love and nature that united her to her family, had never gone so far as to believe, that, were the health, the life of the wife he professed to adore, at stake, he would not instantly consent to aught that would save her. As the conviction of his utter sternness and callous nature was now forced on her, the doting mother's pale face became almost terrible, from the expression of despair imprinted on it. She gazed on her faded child; a shudder passed over her frame; and she lifted her tearful eyes, as if appealing to God, now that hope of mortal aid had left her; and then exclaimed, "And it was *I*, *I*, the mother who should have shielded her, who should have warned, nay, prevented her from wedding one so old, so stern, as this terrible man, who allowed her to bestow the inestimable blessing of her hand on one so wholly unworthy of it! My child, my poor child, can you forgive your unhappy mother for having consigned you to such a fate? Alas! alas! the pressure of poverty had blinded me to the possible chances of misery to my daughter; and with sorrow — oh, how deep yet unavailing! I must now admit, that I have merited the heavy punishment that has fallen on me! Would to God it had fallen on me alone!"

"You must not accuse yourself, dearest mother. *Indeed*, you are not to blame. Who could have foreseen, that aught in human shape could be so cruel as to part us? You saw me form this now hated marriage without any symptom of repugnance; nay, more, with cheerfulness, confident as I felt, that through it I should be enabled to see you, darling mother, and my dear sisters, restored to an elegant competency, if not to affluence! I thought only of the future happy home, the many comforts and enjoyments, my marriage would secure you; and in this anticipated happiness I forgot the age, the ugliness, the chilling manners of him who was to enable me to bestow it. And had he done so, mother, I would have blessed him; I would have been as the most dutiful of daughters to him; and my whole study would

have been to repay his generosity to those dearer to me than life!"

The countenance of Mrs. Herbert while her daughter spoke might have offered a study to an artist who wished to paint the tragic muse. Never had Selina beheld aught so touching — despair and resignation struggled for mastery in that pale face, as all the unselfish and loving nature of her child was revealed to her. And to think that such a creature, so young, so beautiful, so pure and noble-minded, should be so wholly, so irrevocably in the power of one so stern, so lost to every feeling as Mr. Fraser, was torture. In the long and wakeful nights which had passed since her adored daughter had been taken from her, when she tried to imagine some cause for his cruel conduct, and conjured up every probable motive, her worst fears had never pictured him as dark, as terrible, and revoltingly selfish as he was now proved to be.

She felt that with such a man her child must be wretched. Nurtured in the lap of affection, and surrounded from her infancy by a mother and sisters, who, owing to the perfect sympathy that existed in their tastes and thoughts, loved her with a tenderness even beyond that common to such near relations, how was she to bear the change to solitude, with such an uncongenial companion? It was as if a delicate plant, reared in a choice conservatory, where it had been watched with skilful care, had been removed to some dreary and chilling atmosphere, where it must soon fade and die; and she looked at the altered face of her child, and saw that such must be her fate; nay, that already had the work of destruction commenced; for the fragile being before her could not long bear up against the cruel destiny she had wrought for herself, when, through love for her kindred, she had wedded the terrible man who ruled it.

"Hark! did I not hear a voice?" exclaimed Mrs. Fraser, starting up from her pillow, and terror imprinted on every feature. "Oh! mother, disguise yourself quickly, for should he come we are lost. Help her, Selina; load her with all those envelopes that concealed her from my fond eyes; surely they will preserve her from his. Quickly put up her own dark hair, and tie on the false. Ah! there, I can no longer recognise her; even the comfort of seeing her in her own natural shape

and appearance is denied me;" and the poor invalid burst afresh into tears.

"Would to Heaven, darling, that I were never to leave off this disguise, could it secure me the happiness of being near you, of looking at your sweet face, of hearing that dear voice!"

The noise that alarmed Mrs. Fraser was the moving about of the housemaids to perform their matinal tasks; and now the grey dawn began to peep through the shutters, and reminded Mrs. Herbert that she must resume her place as nurse, and be prepared for the entrance of the housemaid, or of *him*, the most dreaded, should he descend to inquire after the invalid. A few drops, of a composing nature, were administered to Mrs. Fraser, at whose request her mother partook some also; and Selina, after receiving the thanks of both mother and child for the warm sympathy she had evinced for them, stole stealthily to her chamber, to dress, and replace "the nurse."

In a few weeks a visible improvement took place in the health of Mrs. Fraser. Her mother's presence seemed to revive and re-animate the principle of life in her delicate frame, as the change from a deleterious climate to a mild and genial one revivifies a broken constitution. The hours of fond communion passed together; the particulars demanded and given of those dear sisters, so often thought of, had made the hours fly so rapidly, that when weeks had gone by, the mother and daughter felt as if only days had passed. There were times when Mrs. Fraser's heart revolted at seeing her mother treated as a menial, when her stern and ill-bred husband questioned her rudely, or when the housekeeper or housemaid spoke to her familiarly; but Mrs. Herbert taught her to conquer these movements of anger, by making her feel, as she did herself, that these little annoyances should give pleasure rather than pain, as furnishing proofs that her disguise had successfully imposed on those who offered them.

"Ah! but mother, how dreadful it is that I am getting well," would Mrs. Fraser say; "for the moment the doctors announce my convalescence you will be sent away from me; and how, after having been again accustomed to the blessing of having you near me, can I ever submit to our separation?"

Whenever Mr. Fraser entered his wife's chamber she would assume a languid air, answer his inquiries in a low voice, and enact the invalid, when she was so much better that she trembled lest her physician should announce that fact to him; but they were in no hurry to abandon a patient who still persisted in declaring that she was not cured, and whose husband was a nabob.

"I should hate myself, dearest mother," would Mrs. Fraser say, "for practising deception about my health, were it not the only chance for detaining you near me; and yet to think, that to retain this blessing I keep you from my sisters, and that you are compelled not only to assume a menial garb, and be treated as a servant, but to injure your health, more precious to me than life, by living enveloped in that huge mass of drapery, that fevers though it conceals you."

Mrs. Herbert had explained to her daughter, that having seen in the newspaper the announcement of her illness, she had searched until she succeeded in discovering the physicians who had been called in to attend her. This discovery had been made by an old and faithful servant; through whose means, also, she learned that a nurse was required. Knowing, by report, that the person recommended by Dr. Percy was an unusually fat woman, the thought of representing her, could she but gain her consent to the measure, at once flashed across the mind of Mrs. Herbert; and she instantly went to Mrs. Norman, told her the truth, promising, that if permitted to personate her, all the remuneration received should be transferred to her. Mrs. Norman, herself a mother, and a good-hearted woman, was touched by the grief and agitation of Mrs. Herbert. Perhaps the desire of fulfilling a long and lucrative engagement in the country, without forfeiting the good opinion of Dr. Percy, by declining the one now proposed, had its might in influencing her decision. She finally yielded to the prayers of the agonized mother, with a proviso that Mrs. Herbert should remain out of sight of the doctor; and, having furnished that lady with the loan of habiliments and false curls, to enable her at once to enter the establishment of Mr. Fraser, and explained that the usual remuneration was a guinea a day, she saw Mrs. Herbert depart, filled with gratitude towards her, for having consented to her wishes.

"Yes, it's very pleasant to serve a worthy person, as this poor lady certainly is," soliloquized Mrs. Norman, "especially where, by doing so, one can likewise serve one's self. I shall, for the next few weeks, be paid for duties performed in the country, while my representative is earning money for me in London; and, after all, should Dr. Percy ever discover the truth, he, with his good heart, will readily pardon this proof of the goodness of mine."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was edifying to hear Mrs. Herbert counselling her daughter to obedience to her husband, and to a patient submission to his will. The excellent woman left no means untried, to strengthen the mind of this gentle and inexperienced creature; but, perhaps, of all the arguments made use of, there was not one which produced so strong an effect on her mind, as the assurance, that her mother could better bear the separation, could she be assured that her child was submitting to it with fortitude, and not ruining her health by repining.

"On the spirit in which we receive trials, dearest, depends their effect," would she say; "patience robs them of much of their bitterness; and the consciousness of having fulfilled our duty to the utmost of our power, becomes a balm to the wounds inflicted by Fate. Let this balm be yours; merit the protection of the Almighty, by submission to *his* will. Remember that there are many persons more unfortunate than you; and that the greater the trials in this life, the greater is the merit of submission. Let me have the comfort of knowing, that the impropriety I have committed, in entering clandestinely a house, whose master had prohibited my presence, has, at least, had a salutary effect on your health and mine."

"But you will write to me, will you not, dearest mother, and let me write to you? Selina, dear, kind, good Selina, will be the medium of communication between us. I know she will. With a letter, now and then, from you, darling mother, I will not sink into despair, as before."

We leave it to casuists to decide, whether or not the fond mother was wrong in yielding to the prayers of her child; or whether Selina committed a crime in pledging herself to convey the correspondence between them; but even should a

verdict be pronounced, by rigid moralists, against Mrs. Herbert and Selina, for thus yielding to the reiterated entreaties of Mrs. Fraser, they would, nevertheless, be consoled by the approval of their own hearts, for having lightened the burden that pressed so heavily on that of the young and unhappy wife.

And now the physicians pronounced the sentence so long dreaded, that Mrs. Fraser was so much better, that a nurse was no longer required. Mr. Fraser immediately signified his desire that Mrs. Norman should leave at the close of the week, only two days of which had to elapse; and his wife was endeavouring to muster up all her strength of mind, to support the separation. Ever since the notification of the improvement in her health had been made to him, which was not until some weeks after those in the secrets of the sick chamber had been aware of the fact, he had become a much more frequent visitor in it, so that the long conversations between the mother and child were broken in on; and they hardly dared count on an hour's freedom from his presence. Without any occupation, he walked continually from room to room of his splendid mansion; scolded the servants, found fault with everything that was done, and incapable, from his bad temper and ill-governed mind, of enjoying a moment's repose, it seemed to be his study that nobody else should, if he could prevent it. Mrs. Herbert, from her first entrance in the house, had incurred his especial dislike. He never saw her without treating her with a rudeness, as unusual as ill-bred, towards a woman occupied in nursing the person he professed to love above all others — his wife. He would mutter his dislike of fat people in her hearing, and his distaste of old women with flaxen locks; and her equanimity under his unprovoked insults had no effect in mitigating them. The evening of the day previous to that named for her departure, Mrs. Herbert was exhorting her weeping daughter to bear their approaching separation with courage, when the door of the chamber was violently thrown open, and, pale with rage, Mr. Fraser rushed in.

"Leave my house, leave my house, instantly," shrieked he, his discordant voice raised to its utmost pitch. Mrs. Herbert grasped a chair for support, and seemed ready to sink on the floor. "I have discovered you, base and shameless woman,

thus to steal into my house, to teach my wife disobedience and deception."

"Mr. Fraser, Mr. Fraser, how can you insult my mother?" exclaimed his wife, pale as marble, and trembling with emotion, as she interposed between them, and embraced Mrs. Herbert.

"She shall go this moment, this very moment," screamed he, "or I will send for the police, and consign her to their charge, for entering my house in disguise, and under a fictitious name."

"And if you do," repeated his wife, drawing herself up, with a dignity that seemed to surprise and awe him, "never again will I look on you as other than a cruel tyrant, who, by his unnatural treatment in separating me from my family, has compelled the disguise and the deception he would now punish so severely."

"My child, he is your husband," said Mrs. Herbert, her trembling lips almost refusing to articulate the words.

"Hypocrite!" exclaimed Mr. Fraser "would you now again deceive me? who is it that has fostered this audacious spirit in a weak girl who before you stole like a thief into my house, dared not question my will, nor seek to frustrate it?"

"You know her not. Oh, my mother, that you, who are all goodness, who have exhorted me so strongly to obedience to this cruel man, should be accused of conduct of which you are so wholly incapable! It is your own injustice and violence, Sir, that has conquered my weak submission. There is a point, and every throb of my heart, and every pang of my wounded feelings tell me so, at which submission would be base and unworthy. Let my mother leave this house, as it becomes a gentlewoman to do, and permit me to occasionally see and hear from her and my sisters, and you will find me in everything else as submissive as before."

"Never, never. Rather would I see you dead at my feet; rather know that my resolution had killed you, than consent to this. I command your mother to leave my house this instant, and never more to pass its doors."

Mrs. Herbert pressed her child to her heart, pronounced a blessing on her head, and resigning the fainting Mrs. Fraser to the arms of Selina, hastily left the room, followed by her ruthless son-in-law, uttering the most cutting reproaches

while she put on her cloak and bonnet, and not losing sight of her until she left the house. He then returned to his wife's chamber; who, hardly restored to consciousness, lay extended on the sofa, where Selina had placed her. She shuddered at his approach, and this involuntary symptom of dread and dislike increased his anger.

"When your scheming mother descends to assuming a disguise and false name," said he sternly, "she should be more careful about her letters. Look here; I found this epistle on the stairs; it fell out of the envelope, which was addressed to her by her false name, and, urged by an irresistible impulse, I perused it, and discovered the cheating that had been practised. This, however, shall never occur again. I will remove you from the reach of your family. I will take you out of England; and it will depend on yourself, whether I overlook the insubordination you exhibited this morning, or not. Have Mrs. Fraser's clothes packed up," said he to Selina, "for we shall leave England at once. But stay," added he, "were you privy to the plan of Mrs. Herbert for entering my house in disguise? who hatched the project? was it Mrs. Fraser, or her mother?"

"Mrs. Herbert, believing her daughter's life to be in danger, and trembling with anxiety for her, sought to attend her as nurse. Mrs. Fraser was wholly ignorant of the deception, until it was accidentally discovered, some time after Mrs. Herbert was in the house."

"You confess, then, that you were aware that the pretended nurse was Mrs. Herbert, yet you made no communication of that fact to me!"

"I saw Mrs. Fraser's health derive such benefit from the care of her mother, that I dared not interfere," replied Selina, timidly.

"Then you cannot be surprised that I at once dismiss you from my wife's service. Leave my house forthwith."

"What! send away the only person who can be of use to me," said my gentle mistress. "You cannot surely be so cruel, in my present weak state, too!" and tears flowed down her face.

"There shall be no confederates in my house, to aid and abet the schemes carried on against my peace," observed her brutal husband. "I will have only those about you whom I

can depend on, who will consult *my* wishes, and not yours. The sooner you leave the house the better," continued he, addressing Selina. "Come with me, and deliver up your mistress's jewels and valuables. The housekeeper can wait on you," added he, turning to his weeping wife, "until a suitable attendant is found for you."

Selina approached Mrs. Fraser, pressed her trembling hand to her lips, and breathed a prayer for her, and then, filled with pity and regret, hurried from the room, leaving her mistress bitterly weeping. She rendered up to Mr. Fraser the costly jewels, and other valuables in her charge, he carefully counting out each, according to the inventory of them delivered to her on entering the house. When this ceremony was finished, he paid her the salary due; and, relaxing a little from his sternness, offered her a present.

"No, Sir, I can accept nothing from one who thinks ill of me," observed Selina; "but, before I depart, pardon me if I warn you that you are trifling with your own happiness, that you will destroy the health of Mrs. Fraser. If you had listened, as I did, Sir, to the excellent counsel Mrs. Herbert gave her daughter, how different would your thoughts be of her! Be assured that never did two more admirable women exist than Mrs. Herbert and Mrs. Fraser, or more deserving of happiness."

"What bribe have they given you for this fulsome praise?" demanded the terrible old man, his sallow face assuming an expression of cunning, mingled with dislike; "and when, pray, has it become the usage for ladies' maids to take on themselves to give their opinions on family affairs to their masters?"

Selina attempted no reply to this speech; but, making him a curtsey, descended the stairs, left the house, and walking to the nearest stand of coaches, entered one, and was driven to her kind friend Mrs. Steadfast's, where she met with a most cordial reception, and would have felt comfortable, could she but forget the unhappy fate of her late charming and interesting mistress, whose thraldom filled her with the deepest pity and regret. In two days after, she read in the "Morning Post," among the list of fashionable movements, the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, from Grosvenor-square, for the Continent, and sighed, as she reflected how sad and pain-

ful such a journey must be to the poor young creature, leaving all dear to her behind, and with so stern and tyrannical a companion. "Alas!" thought Selina, "hers is, indeed, a splendid misery, from which I can foresee no release. Her husband will probably live long enough to preclude all happiness. Her youth will wear away under his galling yoke, or else she will sink into a premature grave, the victim of his cruelty!"

In a few days after, the inquiries of Mrs. Steadfast, made at the request of Selina, in search of a new situation, were crowned with success. The young and beautiful Duchess of Glenallen, whose name figured continually in the newspapers of the day, as "the observed of all observers," the leader of the *ton*, the glass of fashion, required a *femme de chambre*, or rather, something between an humble companion and a lady's maid. A milliner, who was employed by her grace, and who happened to be a near relative of Mrs. Steadfast's, named the subject to her, and offered to recommend Selina, who, the bearer of a letter from the *modiste*, proceeded the following day to Glenallen House, and was admitted to the presence of its noble mistress. The remarkable beauty and aristocratic air of the youthful Duchess greatly struck Selina, but the natural dignity of the high-born lady was so tempered by a graciousness of look and manner, that at once captivated those of an inferior station who approached her, that the grandeur of the stately Duchess was forgotten in the feminine softness of the beautiful woman. When, in answer to her grace's inquiries, Selina informed her of the cause of her having left her last situation, the Duchess looked even more kindly at her than before. "Poor Mrs. Fraser, how much I pity her!" said the Duchess. "You were quite right not to have betrayed her and her unfortunate mother to that dreadful old man. I might, I suppose, refer to Mrs. Herbert for a testimonial of your abilities, not that I in the least doubt them."

"Certainly, your grace."

The letter was written, and, in due time, a most satisfactory answer was received, accompanied by a note for Selina, filled with expressions of gratitude and kindness for her devotion to her late mistress, and regret at Mrs. Fraser's having lost so faithful an attendant.

Selina now entered on her new duties, and her gentle

mistress lightened them by her amiability. She had been some days in the splendid establishment, at Glenallen House, before she saw its master, every hour increasing her admiration for the Duchess.

One morning the Duke's valet tapped at the dressing-room door, and requested to be informed when his grace could be favoured with an interview by the Duchess.

When Selina delivered the message, the Duchess changed colour, and an expression of annoyance overspread her beautiful face. "Tell him I will see the Duke in an hour," said she; and then she lent her cheek on her hand, and remained a few minutes absorbed in reflection, evidently of a painful nature, if the curved brow and compressed lips might be taken as proofs of chagrin. "Give me a glass of water, and drop some sal volatile into it, my good Miss Stratford," said her Grace.

Selina did as she was told, and the Duchess, having drank the contents of the glass, sighed deeply, and, making an effort to resume her self-composure, commenced the duties of her toilette.

From the first day that she entered the house, Selina had been struck by the unequal spirits of her noble mistress, but she had never witnessed her evince such visible signs of painful emotion as since the interview with her lord had been requested. Frequent sighs heaved her exquisite bust, and an impatience in submitting to being attired, never previously noticed by her attendant, certified that the expected visit was anything but agreeable to her. Her toilette completed, she looked at the *pendule* on the mantel-piece, and seeing that the hour was arrived when the Duke might be expected, she told Selina to take in her bouquet and salts to the boudoir, and place them on the table near her *bergère;* and she then betook herself there.

When Selina, having fulfilled her lady's behest, was leaving the boudoir, an aged and infirm gentleman entered it. She drew back to allow him to pass, concluding that he must be some relation, perhaps the grandsire of the Duke or Duchess. Of tall stature, though bent by age, there was something peculiarly aristocratic in the appearance and bearing of this old gentleman. "I fear I have disturbed you earlier than your

accustomed hour of leaving your chamber, Duchess," said he, with an air of perfect good breeding.

"It is of no consequence," was the reply; but the tone in which it was uttered was so unlike the usually bland one of the fair Duchess, that Selina was impressed with a conviction that the person to whom the words were addressed did not stand in the relation to her mistress that she had supposed. No; to a parent of either herself or her husband, more respect, or warmth of manner, would have been shown. Selina left the room, wondering whether it could be possible that the foppish old gentleman she had seen could be the Duke of Glenallen? but there was such a disparity of years between him and the Duchess, that she could hardly bring herself to think so. She had heard from a Frenchwoman, who had been the *femme-de-chambre* of the deceased mother of the Duchess, and who, having also served that lady herself, before her marriage, was still, though past her labour, retained in the establishment as an humble friend and favourite of her noble mistress, that her Grace was an heiress of great wealth; and this circumstance seemed to render her marriage with one so very much her senior still more improbable.

On entering the dressing-room, she found that Madame Fanchon was there, to pay her diurnal visit to the Duchess. *Ah! Mademoiselle*, where is *Madame la Duchesse?*" demanded she.

Selina informed her of the summons that had called her mistress so much earlier than usual from her chamber, and mentioned having seen an old gentleman in the boudoir.

"Dat is de Duke, Mademoiselle, have you not seen him before? *ah! mon Dieu!* he vill make her ill; I am sure he vill. He alvays does ven her asks an *entrevue.* — *Cher ange! quel malheur* to have a bad old man for husband." Then, as if conscious of her indiscretion, the Frenchwoman resumed, "You look good Mademoiselle, you have de education, and are not like dose giddy young vomen, who chatter, chatter, and repeat vhatever dey do hear," forgetting that she, herself, had just given a proof of indiscretion, which rendered her comment on the gossiping propensities of other *femmes-de-chambre* somewhat out of place; "I may derefore say vat I tink to you, Mademoiselle, vidout being afraid you tell to all de vorld, and it *is* a great comfort to be able to open de mous, and let out all

de *triste triste* toughts dat do press on de heart, and veigh it down."

Selina bowed assent to the observation; and encouraged by this, the old Frenchwoman was evidently about to give expression to her long hoarded-up grievances, when the Duchess entered the room, her face flushed, and her whole air denoting discomposure. Her Grace, nevertheless, assumed a more calm demeanour when she saw her old servant, "Ah! *ma bonne* Fanchon, how are you? the rheumatic pains better, I hope?"

"A leetle, a leetle, *cher ange*. But you, you not look like yourself, not happy?"

"I am only hurried, my good Fanchon, I must return to the Duke, who is waiting for me in the boudoir;" and so saying, the Duchess drew a gold key from a chain that was inside her dress, opened her *escritoire*, took out a banker's book, wrote a cheque, and having replaced the book, returned to the boudoir, kindly nodding to the old Frenchwoman, and saying "*A demain, ma bonne Fanchon, à demain.*"

"Ah! I do guess vat all dat means. Bad old man! alvays vanting money. He vill ruin her if he live long; and she, *cher ange*, pays dear for de *liberté* to do vat she please. Bad man! bad man!"

All this seemed strange to Selina; but though her curiosity was strongly excited, she would not, on any account, question the old woman, who, apparently, only waited for a little encouragement, to disclose all she knew.

In a few days after, a letter, with a black seal and deep mourning edges, was delivered to Selina; and great was her astonishment when the signature revealed to her that it came from her late mistress, Mrs. Fraser, and announced that she was now, a (not inconsolable) widow. Yet there was no levity, no elation in the tone of the letter; it said that poor Mr. Fraser (how often is the term "poor," applied to the worthless dead!) had died of an attack of gout in the stomach, in France, ten days after he had reached that country; that she had returned to England with the remains of her late husband, and was now, blessed with the society of her mother and sisters, who had taken up their abode with her, passing the first weeks of her widowhood in seclusion. She ended by say-

ing that she longed to see Selina, whose devoted kindness she never had forgotten and never could forget.

Selina obtained permission to go and see her former mistress.

"I hope, my good Stratford, that she will not seduce you from me," said the Duchess kindly, "for I assure you I should consider such an event as a real misfortune, so well do you suit me in every possible way."

"And I, your Grace, am so deeply impressed with your indulgent goodness, that with all my attachment for Mrs. Fraser, I should grieve to leave your service for hers; now that with her good mother and sisters, and released from the tyranny of so harsh and stern a husband, she can no longer, as formerly, stand in need of me."

"Then unhappiness is the strongest claim to your services, my good Selina?" said the Duchess.

"I did not mean to say so, your Grace," replied Selina, blushing, and looking embarrassed.

"Don't deny the sentiment that is so honourable to you, my good Stratford," observed the Duchess, sighing deeply, "and let me hope you will long remain with me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

SELINA found Mrs. Fraser looking beautiful in her widow's weeds. Never had she appeared to greater advantage; for the grave reflections which the late unexpected event had produced in her mind, had lent a serious, if not a sad expression, to her lovely face. Her reception of Selina was full of grateful affection; nor was that of her mother and sisters less cordial. They duly appreciated the consolation she had been to Mrs. Fraser; and the constancy with which she had borne insult from him, who was no more a denizen on earth, rather than betray the confidence reposed in her. How altered was now the aspect of that house, formerly resembling nothing so much as a gilded prison; where no light footstep was ever heard, no voice of gladness ever sounded; where every one, save its stern gaoler, moved stealthily through the mansion, afraid to awaken an echo; and where he, like some fabled sorcerer of romance, seemed to cast a spell over all, to destroy the peace he could not himself enjoy. Now, although a be-

coming gravity pervaded the abode, that no sounds of rejoicing, no loud knocks of visitors were heard, and no symptoms of feasting or mirth seen, to announce the recovered freedom of its young and beautiful mistress from the state of intolerable thraldom in which she had been held; there were unmistakeable proofs of peace, if not of happiness. The doting mother could now fearless press her child to her heart, and lavish on her those attentions dictated by affection. The duteous daughter could repay them by her tenderness; and the fair and gentle sisters, who had wept so many tears at being separated from the lovely being to whom they were now re-united, basked in her soft smiles, even although those smiles were less frequent, and less joyous than their own. The youthful widow had witnessed death, and in his hours of suffering had pardoned, nay, more, had pitied, and would have saved her husband, had it been in her power. The possession of vast wealth, bequeathed to her by the departed, in the spirit of atonement for pain often inflicted, and patient endurance of it, joined to an unremitting care and attention to soothe the bed of sickness and death had not dazzled her; yes, he, the stern, the obdurate old man, had died blessing her; and she could not look around on the solid comforts and splendour that surrounded her, without remembering that she owed them all to *him*, whose cold remains were so lately consigned to the grave.

Mr. Fraser had bequeathed his widow all he possessed; and the first use she made of her great wealth, was to secure a noble independence to her mother and sisters. The house was redolent of the perfume of flowers, and the carol of birds, the property of the fair sisters, transported there from their former abode. Every implement of feminine occupation had a place in the *salons* formerly so gloomy. Books were within reach on every *guéridon* and table; and gentle voices, and loving words, and sweet smiles, gave that indefinable charm peculiar to an abode inhabited by young, accomplished, and amiable women; and presided over by one so capable of superintending it as Mrs. Herbert.

"I wish, dear Selina, you could return to me," said Mrs. Fraser. "I should so like to have you, who shared my trials, partake my present —" happiness, she was going to say; but she paused, as the word rose to her lip, and, blushing deeply, added, "No, I must not say happiness; it would be

ungrateful to the *dead*, — to *him*, through whose generosity I am enabled to enjoy the manifold comforts around me, and the greatest of all, the society of my dear mother and sisters! If you had seen him, as I did, through his fatal malady, Selina, you would, like me, forget that he was ever harsh and austere, and remember only his regret for past failings, and the kindness evinced at the last. I cannot" — and a tear which stole down her cheek, marked the truth of the assertion — "enjoy the advantages his generosity has secured me, without regretting that they have been acquired by his death."

"If you possessed not dear relatives, who are so certain to promote your happiness as to render it independent of my poor services, I would leave any situation to return to you, dear Mrs. Fraser; but as, happily, you now require not my attention, I cannot leave my present mistress, whose health, by no means good, and whose spirits unequal, render my attention acceptable."

"But you will come to see me, dear Selina, whenever you can; will you not? Be assured that, in me, as well as in my dear mother and sisters, you shall ever find true and constant friends! You must not refuse to accept a slight proof of my regard;" and Mrs. Fraser arose from her sofa, opened her *escritoire*, and taking from it a bank note, forced it into the hand of Selina. "Remember that, in all circumstances and in all times, you may count on me," resumed the lovely and gentle being; "and that under my roof you will ever find a welcome and a home when you desire it."

The mother and sisters of Mrs. Fraser were no less kind than herself to Selina, who left the house filled with gratitude at having secured such friends.

A growing good will by degrees sprung up between the worthy old Frenchwoman and Selina. The former soon perceived that Mademoiselle, as she called her, was far superior to any person in her station with whom she had hitherto been brought into contact; that she possessed none of the vulgar and idle curiosity, peculiar to *femmes de chambre;* and that she performed her functions in the service of the Duchess more as a labour of love than a mere discharge of them for profit. Adoring the Duchess, the good woman felt disposed to love all who sympathized in her affection for that bright and beautiful being, while she resented, as a personal injury, any

symptom of coldness, or a less fervent admiration for her than her own. The Duke's name was never mentioned in her presence without its producing a change in her countenance, a deep sigh, almost amounting to a groan, or an impatient shrug of the shoulders. "Ah, if you knew all, Mademoiselle, how you would pity *ce cher ange!*" would the Frenchwoman say; "and yet, dat one vid such beauty, such talents, such fortune, and high birt, should, trough de vickedness of oders, become an object of pity, instead of one of pride, to dose who know her, almost breaks my old heart. No day does pass dat I do not tremble for her. Vid her varm heart, no von to love, whom it is not a sin, a crime to love. *O, mon Dieu*, vhere vill all dis end! All de vorld is at her feet. She is so beautiful, dat all de men adore her; and so leetle vain, dat de vomen forgive her for her beauty. Her husband does not advise, does not varn her; he leaves her to float about in de dangerous sea of fashion, like a ship dat has no von to steer its course, to point out de rocks and de quicksands dat may destroy it. She is so young, *pauvre cher ange*, she not know de vorld at all; and if she do vat is wrong, vat is crime, she vill von day avake to such misery, dat it vill kill her, or — she vill kill herself."

Such were the reflections that used to burst from the over-burthened heart of the old Frenchwoman, and fill that of Selina with pity and dread. Often, when she answered the summons of the Duchess's bell in the morning, she found her with heavy eyes and pallid cheeks, that betrayed that tears more frequently filled up the hours of night than sleep; and although, when she paid her daily visit in the dressing-room, the Duchess would endeavour to conceal her depression of spirits under the mask of affected gaiety, she could not impose on her old and faithful servant, who during the rest of the day would be wretched.

Though extremely attached to her, it was evident that the Duchess avoided a *tête-à-tête* with Madame Fanchon. Was it that she dreaded the remonstrances of the privileged old creature, who had been more the humble friend than servant of the mother whose memory she still fondly cherished, as well as her own devoted attendant since her birth? Whatever the motive might be, it was clear to Selina, that the Duchess invariably avoided a *tête-à-tête* with Fanchon, and made ex-

cuses, whenever, as was often the case, it was solicited. The lowness of spirits increased, the traces of tears became more frequent, and for whole hours the Duchess would sit leaning her head on her hand, so wholly absorbed in reflections, — and painful ones they must have been, judging by the expression of her countenance, — as to be totally unconscious of the presence of Selina. Then she would start from her reverie, look at the *pendule*, dress in a hurry, go to her boudoir, and remain there until her carriage was announced. Sometimes it would remain at the door, the Duchess forgetting it had been ordered, until it was too late to go out; and then, even more dispirited than before, she would enter her dressing-room, to attire herself for some grand dinner at which she was expected to appear, when it was evident she was almost unequal to the fatigue of dressing.

During the long nights that Selina had to sit up for her noble mistress, the old French woman, whose confidence in her discretion had now become quite established, related to her the history of the childhood and girlhood of the Duchess, without her having given the slightest encouragement to such a measure. So long had her hoarded secrets been shut up in her own heart, not, as it was plain, from discretion, so much as from not having hitherto found a person to whom she thought she could safely confide them, that she now poured them out freely, interspersed with many ejaculations and severe censures on those to whom the Duchess's fate had been confided. We will relate the tale in a less diffuse and more sober style.

The Duchess of Glenallen was left an orphan when only in her fourth year. Her mother, one of the most faultless beings on earth, died in giving her birth; and her father, the Marquis of Oakhampton, followed his beloved wife to the grave, in four years after; leaving his only child one of the richest heiresses in England. Of the two guardians to whose care he bequeathed his child, one died within a few months after the trust had been confided to him; and the other was, as it unfortunately turned out, one of the last persons in whom such a trust should be reposed; being a man whose indolence and sybarite habits of self-indulgence had, and with good cause, become proverbial. He, lamenting the trouble and responsibility entailed on him by his guardianship, requested a

female relation to provide a governess for the infant heiress: the person selected was a weak-headed, good-natured French-woman; who soon became so passionately attached to the little girl, that she lavished on her all the tenderness and indulgence calculated to injure a nature disposed to exert, even at that tender age, a self-will not often seen in children so young.

Madame de Montauban had once been a mother, and lost her daughter at about the same age as the pupil now confided to her care. The little girl had been very beautiful, and her death almost occasioned that of her mother, so intense had been her grief for the loss. Every handsome child of a similar age, ever seen afterwards, reminded the poor bereaved mother of her lost one; nay, she fancied she could trace a striking resemblance in each to her departed Julie. In the little Lady Louisa Evermond, this fancied resemblance struck Madame de Montauban more than ever; hence she abandoned herself to an adoration for her that amounted to little less than idolatry. The clever child soon perceived the influence she had acquired over her weak governess, and exercised it, if not rudely or violently, with a pertinacity that never failed to carry whatever point she was bent on obtaining; and, as Madame de Montauban never combated her self-will, the poor erring woman remained unconscious that her pupil could be indocile if resisted.

The *femme de chambre* of her late mother was, by desire of the Marchioness, always to remain with her daughter; and as she transferred all the affection she had borne to her late mistress to the child, it is not to be wondered at, that Lady Louisa grew up wholly unaccustomed to the slightest constraint, and was disposed to give, instead of to receive the law from her governess. Lord Maplebury, the relative to whom her guardianship now devolved, had, to spare future trouble to himself, decided that Madame de Montauban should continue to fill the same post near Lady Louisa, when that young lady advanced to girlhood, that she was to occupy during the childhood of her pupil. Hence there was no chance for the over-indulged girl finding, when she entered her teens, a governess who might correct the errors engendered by her predecessor. Had any one told Madame de Montauban that she was injuring her pupil by her injudicious indulgence, and

irrational mode of bringing her up, she would not only have resented such a charge with indignation, but would have been convinced of its utter injustice.

She loved Lady Louisa so fondly, was so vain of her beauty, and accomplishments, that she never imagined the possibility that even the most fastidious critic could detect aught to find fault with in a creature so lovely and amiable. The truth was, the defects in her pupil were so seldom called into action, that Madame de Montauban, herself a very sweet-tempered, kind-hearted woman, was, if not wholly unconscious of their existence, at least far from being acquainted with their extent: yielding a ready assent to most, if not all the wishes of the young lady, no occasion was afforded for the exhibition of ill-humour or frowardness; or if some symptoms of petulance were occasionally suffered to appear, their duration was so brief, and the *amende*, in redoubled marks of affection, so quickly followed, that they were soon forgotten.

Lady Louisa Evermond was passionately fond of music, and required no stimulus to urge her to devote the due time and attention necessary for becoming a proficient in it. Drawing was to her a positive pleasure, instead of an irksome task. Reading she delighted in, because the books furnished for her perusal were much more calculated to amuse than to instruct; hence, the governess congratulated herself on having the most docile pupil in the world; and boasted that "*ce cher ange* never gave her the least trouble, but was quite as desirous to pursue her studies, as *she* could be to incite her to them."

Lady Louisa was not like the generality of over-indulged young persons, ungrateful, or ungracious to her governess. On the contrary, if she neither feared nor respected her very much, she loved her a great deal; and conscious that Madame de Montauban entertained for her the most devoted affection, warmly repaid it.

When Lady Louisa Evermond had achieved her sixteenth year, Madame de Montauban was seized by an illness which, after the duration of three weeks, put a period to her existence. It was then that the orphan girl, rich in beauty and in fortune, became sensible, for the first time, of the isolation of her position. The kind friend, who had doted on her to such a degree as to be either blind to her faults or too partial

to reprove them, was now no more. She had no longer by her side one who was not only ready to fulfil all her wishes, but who even endeavoured to anticipate them, and who seemed to think she was only sent into the world to save her pupil from every care and annoyance. Deep was the grief of Lady Louisa for her governess. A thousand traits of the gentleness, fondness, and indulgence of poor Madame de Montauban, were now recalled to her mind, and as many self-reproaches came with them, at remembered slights and offences on her own part; viewed by her, when they occurred, as scarcely meriting blame, but which she would now have given all she possessed to recall. Grief is often a corrective of the errors of youth. It ripens, while it sobers the mind. How far it might have had this beneficial effect on that of Lady Louisa, no opportunity of judging was afforded; for, unfortunately, no sooner was the guardian of that young lady made acquainted with the death of Madame de Montauban, than he applied to a female relative of his to recommend some one to fill her place.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

In the course of a week, a lady arrived at the villa, near London, where, for the sake of having masters from the metropolis, the residence of Lady Louisa had been chosen. A more unfortunate selection of a governess to correct the errors engendered by the kind-hearted Frenchwoman could not have been made than in Mrs. Western. Grave and unbending to austerity, a smile or kind word as seldom emanated from the lips of this rigid disciplinarian, as gentle thoughts did from her cold heart. Her stiff carriage and stern countenance made a most disagreeable impression on Lady Louisa, and the harsh tones of her voice achieved it. The natural good breeding of the young lady, led her to make some attempt to do the honours of her house to the stranger, and the effort was a painful one, for her grief was increased, rather than diminished, when she saw the person who was to take the place of her poor dear Madame de Montauban. She, however, soon regretted that she had taken the trouble of enacting the hostess, when she saw Mrs. Western assume all the airs of a *gouvernante* towards a child of some eight or nine years

of age, instead of observing the respectful politeness due to a young lady of nearly double that number of years.

"I trust that your ladyship has not been idle since the death of my predecessor," said Mrs. Western, unceremoniously taking the *bergère* never occupied since Madame de Montauban had sat in it.

"I have been too much afflicted by the death of the friend of my youth," replied Lady Louisa, and the tremulous movement of her lips, and tones of her voice, bore evidence to the truth of her assertion, "to think of anything but the loss I have sustained."

"I am sorry that the lady I have replaced did not better fulfil her duty, than to leave one so long under her care, ignorant of the impropriety, nay more, the sin, of dwelling on painful subjects, and of giving way to useless regrets."

"I must beg, Madam," and Lady Louisa drew herself up to the utmost altitude of her height, "that nothing in the shape of a censure may be uttered against one whose death I shall always deplore, and whose memory I shall ever fondly cherish," and here a passionate burst of tears proved the depth of her emotion.

"Poor young lady," exclaimed Mrs. Western, her cold grey eyes glancing sternly at the weeping and agitated girl before her. "I see that I have much to undo before I can hope to establish that steady equilibrium of mind, without which mortals must ever be the sport of circumstances, and the slaves of their own over-indulged sensibility."

A feeling nearly allied to anger and indignation stopped the tears of Lady Louisa. To shed them before one so heartless and stern, would, she thought, be unworthy of what was due to herself. A presentiment that this was but the commencement of a series of annoyances to be expected from the disagreeable woman before her, and which it would require all her strength of mind and fortitude to resist, flashed through her thoughts, and she became calm and dignified in a moment.

"It may be as well, Madam," said she, "that we should at once come to a perfect understanding with respect to our relative positions, before any thing can occur that may render them disagreeable or offensive. I have entered on my seventeenth year, a period when young women are generally eman-

cipated from the care of a governess, and when, as in my unfortunate case, they are motherless;" and here her lips again trembled as the recollection of her own isolated position occurred to her; "the *rôle* of the governess changes to that of *chaperon* or companion, in which light only can I consider you."

"Age, in my opinion, should make no difference in the position of a conscientious governess," replied Mrs. Western. "*Some* young ladies are as much children at sixteen, ay, or even after they have entered their seventeenth year, as at eight or nine," and here the speaker smiled superciliously; "and consequently require a governess to correct their false notions, and regulate their morbid feelings, quite as much as children do."

"I am not disposed to reason on the hypothesis you have assumed," observed Lady Louisa, proudly, and somewhat maliciously, "if I were, I might say, that with some persons, even the advanced age of half a century, does not always preclude errors and defects. I shall simply confine myself to stating that in no other light than as a companion or *chaperon* can I consider you; and that any attempt on your part to enact any other *rôle*, will find me not only refractory but unmanageable."

The pale stern face of Mrs. Western became flushed with anger as she listened to this speech. She had been told by the lady who had recommended her to the guardian of Lady Louisa, as a fit person to replace Madame de Montauban, that she must be prepared to find her pupil a high-spirited, spoilt child, whom it would be her duty to correct, and bring to reason.

"Firmness and severity are the only weapons that will enable you to conquer the haughty and ungovernable character of this young lady," said Mrs. Austin, "and if you wish to fulfil your duty, you must not be sparing of either."

Be it known to our readers that Mrs. Austin, the giver of this counsel, and near relative of Lord Maplebury, the guardian of Lady Louisa Evermond, had her own motives for urging Mrs. Western to harshness, and severity towards her future pupil. The Duke of Glenallen, an old and profligate voluptuary, whose fortune had sustained as much injury from the ruinous extravagance in which he had through a long

course of years indulged, as his constitution had from the dissipation to which he had abandoned himself, was now anxious to barter his title for wealth, and to find some young and lovely being, who, for the sake of the ducal coronet which he could place on her brow, would consent to soothe his declining years, and sacrifice her youth and beauty to age and infirmity. But where was this *rara avis* to be found? Loveliness without wealth would not suit him, and wealth without beauty would not satisfy him. To Mrs. Austin, an old friend, the Duke confided his wants and wishes only a month before the death of Madame de Montauban; and it instantly occurred to her, that through her influence with her relative, Lord Maplebury, she might assist in arranging a marriage between the Duke and his ward, Lady Louisa Evermond. To be sure, such a union could not fail to be considered most disproportionate. So young, so lovely, and so rich as the lady was, she could not, the moment she entered society, escape being sought by a train of suitors, whose claims to her regard would leave those of the aged Duke immeasurably behind. She must therefore be sought and won before she entered the great world — but how was this to be accomplished? attended as she ever was by her fond and watchful governess, who never quitted her side, and who had keenness of apprehension enough quickly to discover the views of those around her, and to defeat them the moment she deemed it necessary. The Lady Louisa was so happy, too, with her kind and doting governess, that she could have no inducement, save love, almighty love, for wishing to change her situation. So great, too, was the notion entertained by Madame de Montauban, of the merits of her beautiful *élève*, that there were few men, whatever their deserts might be, that she would consider worthy of becoming her husband. How little chance, then, could the old and infirm Duke have to conciliate her good opinion, or to blind her to the utter unsuitableness of such a marriage! No, Mrs. Austin saw there was no hope of success in that quarter, and had abandoned the project when Lord Maplebury called on her to announce the death of Madame de Montauban, and to request her to find a successor for that lady.

"But you must remember, my good cousin," said Mrs. Austin, "that Lady Louisa is now past sixteen, and that she

requires a *dame de compagnie* rather than a governess."

"Call her what you will, *dame de compagnie*, *chaperon*, governess, anything, provided I am not to be troubled. Really my health and habits will not permit me to be harassed."

"Nevertheless, my good cousin, in a few months more you must have this young lady home, must have her presented at Court, fill your house with company, and escort her into public."

"Not for worlds! not for worlds! Don't name such a thing. Why the very notion puts me in a fever. Feel how my hand burns; why did I consent to be named one of her guardians? It was perfect madness. But who could have anticipated that the other two guardians would die, and leave me in for the whole trouble?"

Mrs. Austin was more than half tempted to offer to relieve her cousin from the charge which weighed so heavily upon him, and to say that *she* would undertake to receive Lady Louisa under her roof; but the dread of this proposal being rejected, checked her, for she knew that Lord Maplebury was disposed to suspicion, and liked to defeat the projects of those whom he thought had any design on him. She recollected, too, that *he* knew she was in embarrassed circumstances, for he had more than once come forward to her aid with considerable sums; hence she fancied that he would attribute her offer of receiving his ward to its true cause, — an interested motive.

"Yes, yours, my dear cousin, is in truth a troublesome task, and it is a pity you ever undertook it. But you are so kind-hearted, so unselfish, that you are prone to think only of others, and to forget and forego your own comfort."

Perhaps in the whole circle of her acquaintance Mrs. Austin knew not an individual as selfish as Lord Maplebury; and so perfectly convinced was she of this fact, that had sh been called on to name the person the most engrossed by self, her cousin would have instantly occurred to her mind. With this conviction, it required no little hypocrisy to utter the compliment she had just pronounced, and no slight confidence in the weakness and vanity of him to whom it was addressed, to suppose it would be acceptable. But when was flattery found to be unacceptable? and the knowledge of

mankind evinced on this occasion by the artful and designing Mrs. Austin, was repaid by the complacency of the peer.

"You are right," replied he, "I *do* trouble myself too much about others, and after all, *à quoi bon?* One never gets any return for it, no gratitude. Why, would you believe it, it was only last week that my rascal of a cook refused to take physic, although I put myself into a fever in endeavouring to persuade him."

"How good and kind of you!"

"The soups and *entrées* for three days before proved to me that his palate had lost its delicacy of taste, *ergo*, he required physic. I sent for my doctor, had Beauplat examined, and a medicine was ordered for him; the rascal positively refused to take it; nay, only fancy his ingratitude, when I endeavoured to persuade him, the fellow said that he was sure I cared not a rush about his health, and only thought of my own dinner. There's gratitude for you! After that, busy yourself about the health of your servants! In the same way, there's Janillion, my *maître d'hôtel*, who has a cough, the very sound of which attacks my nerves so much, that I am forced to order him out of the room; and when I said he must either get cured or leave my service, the fellow had the coolness to tell me that in France an old servant was never discharged because he was ill, and insinuated that I thought more of my own ears being annoyed by his cough, than of his lungs suffering."

"How shocking! But this comes from your being too good, too kind; indeed it does."

"I believe you are right, cousin. But let us now think of the person who is to be sent to replace Madame de Montauban. Do you know of any one?"

"Yes, I do know a lady, very highly recommended, and your ward, by all accounts, requires a very superior person, for I have heard that she is extremely self-willed and unmanageable."

"Not more so, I dare say, than the rest of her sex. You are all self-willed and unmanageable, cousin, which is the reason that I have never married."

"You are determined on not bringing Lady Louisa to your house, which you ought to do, or else find a home for her, with

some single lady of good family, who could present her in society."

"We'll think of that in another year. It will be quite time enough. There's no hurry. Many girls are not presented until eighteen; and an heiress ought to be introduced into the world rather later than sooner than any other young women."

"Well, then, I will at once engage Mrs. Western. Shall I send her to have an interview with you, and take your instructions?"

"On no account. I leave all the arrangements to you. Give her all the instructions you think necessary, but don't let me have any more trouble on the subject."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mrs. Western was engaged, and despatched, after having received the advice and instructions of Mrs. Austin to rule her pupil with a firm hand, and not, on any account, to give way to her in a single point. "If you do, your stay will be short, I can assure you," were the last words of Mrs. Austin, when she bade her farewell. How well disposed Mrs. Western was to follow this counsel, her first interview with Lady Louisa proved. But the disposition to tyrannize increased every day, as her natural acerbity of temper was aroused into action by the dignified coldness with which her attempts to control the young lady were met. The home, hitherto so cheerful and happy, was now rendered unbearable to Lady Louisa; who, before a fortnight had elapsed after the arrival of Mrs. Western, felt herself compelled to write to her guardian, to request the dismissal of that person.

Lord Maplebury was suffering under a slight attack of gout, when his ward's letter reached him; and having read only the signature, he instantly despatched it to Mrs. Austin, who perused it with no slight satisfaction, as every line bore testimony how faithfully *her* instructions to Mrs. Western had been carried into effect. "Yes, my scheme works well," thought she. "I saw that Mrs. Western was a short-sighted fool, as well as an ill-tempered woman; had she not been so, she would have neglected my advice, and conciliated the good-will of Lady Louisa, who could so well repay her indul-

gence hereafter; and I almost feared she would. But now all is right, and it only remains for me to see the Duke of Glenallen, and make my own terms for securing him the hand of the fair heiress."

The terms were made; Mrs. Austin was not only permitted, but incited, to render the position of Lady Louisa insupportable; no answers were returned to the letters of complaint addressed to her guardian, who never read a single one of them; and who was told by Mrs. Austin, to whom he sent them, that the fault was all on the side of his ward, and that Mrs. Western must not be interfered with. Meanwhile, the Duke of Glenallen was advised by his confidante to take a villa, the grounds of which joined those of the one occupied by Lady Louisa. Here his Grace had opportunities of seeing the lovely heiress during her daily walks; and such was the impression made by her beauty on his susceptible heart, that even her fortune, greatly as he stood in need of it, became only a secondary object in his mind. He found means, through his *valet de chambre*, to corrupt the housemaid of Lady Louisa, who nightly placed a letter, breathing the most passionate vows of love, on the pillow of the young lady, whose youth and inexperience rendered her unconscious of the impropriety of the measure. Had Madame de Montauban been alive, the first letter would have been at once shown to her by her pupil; but such was the treatment she had experienced at the hands of Mrs. Western, that she was determined to repose no confidence in her. The love-letters were therefore kept a secret; and, truth to say, were perused with pleasure by one who felt that she stood alone in the world, and had no friend to protect her from the insulting tyranny of Mrs. Western.

About this time a new proof of the desire to vex and control Lady Louisa was given by her *femme de chambre* being discharged, without even a cause being alleged for so arbitrary a measure. Mademoiselle Fanchon had been, as we previously stated, with her since her birth; had been her mother's maid, and doted on her young mistress. Madame de Montauban, who valued and esteemed her, had always treated her with great kindness and consideration, and Lady Louisa was greatly attached to her. This last fact was the sole cause of her dismissal; and Lady Louisa, who felt it to be so, shed

many tears, when she saw her humble but faithful friend driven from her house.

The Duke of Glenallen, who, through his valet, was made acquainted with every thing that occurred in the establishment of Lady Louisa, sought an interview with Mademoiselle Fanchon, the day of her dismissal. He encouraged her complaints, conciliated her good will, and took so lively an interest in the fate of her young lady, that the old Frenchwoman, captivated by his urbanity and condescension, and above all, by the purity with which he spoke her own language, lent a willing ear to his advice.

"Go to Lord Maplebury," said the Duke, "see him, and tell him all you have told me. He will, he must, release Lady Louisa from the tyranny under which she now pines, and replace you with her."

Well did the Duke know that Mademoiselle Fanchon's visit to Lord Maplebury would produce no effect; but he had his own motives in urging it. "If you do not succeed in righting your charming mistress, we will then see what can be done to free her."

Mademoiselle Fanchon adopted this counsel; was told Lord Maplebury was engaged, and could see no one. A long letter which she wrote, inclosing one from Lady Louisa, was, like all the former ones, sent to Mrs. Austin; and after waiting a few days, Mademoiselle Fanchon again sought an interview with the Duke of Glenallen, who was, she now considered, the only friend her poor young lady or herself had in the world. A less simple-minded woman than Mademoiselle Fanchon, might well have been deceived into this belief; so artfully and skilfully did the old *roué* enact his part.

"What can be done, my good Mademoiselle?" demanded he; "you see it is useless to expect any amelioration in your poor dear young lady's terrible position from Lord Maplebury. Has she no other friend, no relation from whom she can claim protection?"

"Alas! no."

"Does any plan suggest itself to you, Mademoiselle?"

"Only one, your Grace, and that is *le dernier ressource*. It is for Miladi to elope vid me. I have some monies, several hundreds of pounds, left me by her dear dead moder, and de savings of my vages. On dis Miladi could live in a little cot

tage, until she comes of age, and I vill be her *femme de chambre, femme de charge, cuisinière* and every ting, until she is twenty-vone."

The duke shook his head, and said, "You forget, Mademoiselle, that Lady Louisa's reputation might be compromised by such a step, and more, that her guardian would have the right to reclaim her."

"*Bon Dieu!* den dere is no vay to save *ma chère* Miladi?"

"Yes, there is *one* way, and but *one;* and yet there are many objections to it."

"But if it is de only vay, ve must take it."

"It is for me to free Lady Louisa by making her my wife."

Mademoiselle Fanchon started with such undissembled astonishment, that the old *roué*, whose skill in the arts of the toilette, and in concealing the ravages of time, had, he hoped, given him the appearance of a man at least twenty years younger than he really was, felt hurt and mortified.

"It is true, I am not so youthful a suitor as Lady Louisa might expect," observed his Grace; "but my rank, my fortune, render me in all other respects a most eligible *parti;* and after all, I can see no other mode of freeing her. If I did, be assured, Mademoiselle, I would not have suggested this one; for however great the attractions of Lady Louisa, and I hear they are very powerful, I have no desire to marry, and pity for her cruel position has alone prompted my proposal."

"Yes, yes, you speak vat is right. It is de only vay to save *ma pauvre maîtresse.* To live nearly five years more vid dat horrid Madame Vestern is too terrible to be tought of. Yes, yes, de only ting is to marry. But how is it to be done?"

"Leave all that to me. I will obtain a special license, have a female relation of high rank in a chaise and four on the road outside the garden of Lady Louisa's villa; you will be on the spot to accompany your lady to my house in London, where my chaplain will be in readiness to bestow on us the nuptial benediction."

"But vill Miladi Louisa consent to go vid you, to marry you?" demanded Mademoiselle Fanchon, looking doubtingly.

"I hope she will; for what else can she do? You had better write her a letter, stating all I have now told you, Mademoiselle."

"It is no use; dat horrid Madame Vestern vill not allow a letter to reach Miladi. *Hélas! Hélas!* vat a *pénible position!*"

"Write the letter, nevertheless, and I will see if I cannot find means to convey it. I really feel such pity for this young lady, that there is nothing I would not attempt, to rescue her."

Mademoiselle Fanchon's letter, enclosed in a passionate one from the Duke, urging an elopement and marriage, as the sole mode of freeing herself from the shackles of Mrs. Western, reached Lady Louisa safely. She still hesitated whether she should adopt the alternative proposed; but some fresh acts of aggression on the part of her *gouvernante*, the following day, decided her. The next night, when all in the house slept save the housemaid, the youthful heiress, escorted by that person, left the villa for ever, and in a few minutes she found herself in the arms of her faithful Fanchon, who led her to the carriage of the Lady Isabella Villeroy, the sister of the Duke of Glenallen, who received her with an affectionate warmth that greatly soothed and reassured her drooping spirits. They proceeded to London, and stopped at the mansion of the Lady Isabella, where every thing had been prepared for their reception.

"Here, my sweet sister, — for so you must permit me to call you; to-morrow you will be really so," said Lady Isabella Villeroy, — "you will find an end of the slavery and annoyances you have undergone;" and she embraced Lady Louisa, who now, for the first time, saw her face in the well-lighted drawing-room. Great was her surprise as she looked on a countenance that bore evident marks that at least half a century had passed over it, leaving many deep furrows traced by its progress. There was something incongruous (to her thinking at least,) in a girl of little more than sixteen being addressed as a sister, by one who looked old enough to be her grandmother; and then came the thought of how the Duke, who had looked so handsome, (she had only seen him at a considerable distance,) could have so elderly a sister.

"She is probably by a former marriage, for she must be at least twenty-five years his senior," thought Lady Louisa. "I am sorry that I don't find in his sister a person nearer my own age, of whom I could make a friend. But *he* must be friend and all to me *now*. How beautifully he writes, and

what a distinguished air he has! I wonder whether he is really as handsome when near as he appeared at a distance. How romantic, that we should never have met, never have spoken, until we meet at the altar! I never read any thing in a novel so romantic as this!"

Lady Isabella Villeroy had too much quickness of apprehension, not to have remarked the disagreeable impression produced by her age on the mind of her future sister, and too much tact, not to wish to remove it. She spoke of her own bad health, which, as she asserted, made her look many years older than she was, and added, that although her face had lost the freshness of youth, her heart still preserved it, as her dear sister should find, when they knew each other better. She accompanied Lady Louisa to her chamber, remained with her until Madame Fanchon was dismissed, thus preventing any confidential communication on her part, and was the first in the morning to undraw the curtain of Lady Louisa, whom she left not until they together entered the carriage that was to convey them to Grosvenor Square. The Duke met them in the hall of his mansion, and so admirably had his wig-maker, valet, and tailor performed their parts in getting him up, that at the first glance his future bride felt perfectly satisfied with his appearance. Short lived, however, was her satisfaction; for no sooner did he approach close to her, than, in spite of all the aids of art, she detected the melancholy fact, that her bridegroom was even considerably older than his sister, the Lady Isabella Villeroy. Tall, finely-formed, and free from the *embonpoint* so destructive to the would-be-juvenility of elderly ladies and gentlemen, the Duke, at a certain distance, was still a very fine-looking man; but had Lady Louisa following his Grace's example, trusted less to her eyes, and used an opera-glass with a very powerful lens, as he had been wont to do when looking at her walking in the pleasure grounds of her villa, she could not have been mistaken about his age. Sundry deep lines, known by the appellation of crow's feet, encircled the Duke's eyes, the lids of which, too, were greatly wrinkled, and the orbs themselves were dim and faded. His brow was a map traced by the harsh finger of Time. Nor did the fair and profuse locks that shaded it, render its appearance less ancient. His whiskers were so precisely the same colour as his hair, that they instantly suggested the notion, that not

to Nature's cunning hand, but that of a skilful wig-maker did he owe them, and his teeth were so even and regular, that most gentlemen of his age might be tempted to inquire the name of the maker.

Such was the exterior of the Duke of Glenallen, the first man who had awakened a tender thought in the breast of the young and beautiful Lady Louisa, who now shuddered as he took her hand, drew her trembling arm through his, and led her to the state drawing-room, where an altar had been arranged, near to which his Grace's chaplain, in full canonicals, stood with open book, ready to perform the solemn ceremony that was to unite age and youth, beauty and infirmity, in the indissoluble bond of wedlock.

For a moment the unfortunate and deceived girl felt disposed to refuse to permit the marriage to be solemnized. She trembled at the thought of pronouncing the fatal vows, that were to bind her for ever to the strange being before her! The snowy locks, and toothless gums of age would have been less repugnant to her than the curious specimen of the florid gothic she was contemplating; for age, when no attempt to conceal or disguise it is made, inspires, at least, respect; but "the painted show;" the wrinkled, be-wigged, and be-whiskered, old man by her side; who was smiling, and looking the enraptured lover, excited only her disgust; and she wished herself back with the tyrannical Mrs. Western, to endure again all the insults heaped on her, rather than become the bride of the Duke. But then came the thought of his kindness — his desire to emancipate her; and, above all, the girlish shame and timidity, which deprived her of the moral courage to decline having the marriage ceremony performed now, when all was prepared for it. No; she felt that she could not avow the truth; she could not acknowledge that it was only while she believed her suitor to be a young man, that his vows were acceptable to her; that she was ready to avail herself of his aid to escape from the severity of Mrs. Western, and the thraldom in which she was held by that tyrannical woman. She must now submit to the fate entailed on her by a tissue of circumstances, over which she had no controul; and while shrinking with dismay and disgust from the man who fondly clasped her hand in his, she must pronounce the fatal words that united their destinies. A desperate courage

replaced the trembling timidity and fear that, a minute before, had filled her breast. She suffered the Duke to lead her to the altar; forced herself, although in a voice scarcely audible, to utter the prescribed words; and felt the ring placed on her finger.

She seemed as if in a dream, — a painful, a terrible dream it was! until at the completion of the ceremony, when the bridegroom pressed his lips to hers — those rosy virginal ones, which had never before known the touch of man; — she uttered a faint cry, and would have fallen to the ground had not the Duke supported her. It was some time ere she was restored to consciousness. When she opened her eyes, and saw her husband bending over her on one side of the sofa where she had been placed, and the plain face of his sister on the other, she closed them again with an involuntary shudder, as if to shut out a sight too painful to be borne. A sigh, amounting almost to a groan, burst from her oppressed bosom; and then, summoning all her strength of mind to her aid, she declared herself to be better, and then thanked the Duke and his sister for their kind attention.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Lord Maplebury's dislike to trouble, prevented him from taking any steps to mark his dissatisfaction at the stolen marriage of his ward. He contented himself, when the intelligence reached him, with giving instructions to his legal advisers, to see that the Duchess's fortune was secured to herself; a measure which the pride and affected disinterestedness of her husband prevented him from disputing; and when Mrs. Austin assured Lord Maplebury that he might consider himself fortunate in being now rid of all trouble about his ward, he was not disposed to question the assertion, or to regret the cause. Mrs. Austin received the sum she had bargained for from the Duke, and Mrs. Western touched a quarter's salary for the few weeks she had domineered over her late pupil.

The Duke and Duchess of Glenallen left England, a few days after their nuptials, and the prolonged *tête-à-têtes*, which travelling afforded them, far from decreasing the dislike of the young and lovely bride to her old husband, only served to

increase it to such a degree, that she found it impossible to conceal the symptoms of her repugnance. The *amour propre* of the vain old *roué* became wounded, as daily evidence of his wife's personal distaste towards him was revealed. His ill-temper, which he now took no pains to conceal, achieved the dislike previously excited in the heart of the Duchess, and made her reckless of annoying him. The admiration that followed her wherever she appeared, gratified her vanity; and the discovery that it vexed her jealous lord, only induced her to encourage, still more openly, the attentions of a train of admirers who surrounded her. The fame of her beauty and fascination, with all the spiteful comments that such fame never fails to excite, had spread far and wide, raising up a host of envious women, and scandal-loving men, prepared to question her claims, if not to admiration, at least to respect, when she returned to England. Her arrival in London produced, in fashionable *parlance*, quite a sensation. The women denied her beauty with a pertinacity and warmth, only to be equalled by that with which the men avowed it to be matchless; and ere the Duchess had been a month in London, the sceptre of beauty and fashion was decreed to her by the suffrages of those who elect a sovereign for the season. The impartiality with which the lovely Duchess received the homage of all her admirers, precluded any jealousy among them, until, in an evil hour, Lord Glastonbury, captivated by her smiles, entered the lists, determined to leave no art untried to make an impression on a heart that had hitherto resisted all who had attempted to subdue it. It would be a feat worthy his ambition, and, *coûte qui coûte*, he would essay it. He studied the tastes and character of the Duchess, and found that beneath much levity an under-current of strong feeling and romantic sentiment lay hidden, by awakening which, only could her peace be endangered, or her virtue overthrown. He assumed a melancholy air, would sit apart, with his eyes fixed on her face, while other men pressed around her, until by pursuing this line of conduct it attracted her attention, and excited her curiosity. Whenever he caught her glance, he would appear embarrassed, turn away, yet resume his earnest gaze when he thought her unobservant of it; hover near to listen to the sound of her voice, and start as from a deep reverie when spoken to. A perseverance of some weeks in

this system was crowned with success. That he admired her, the Duchess felt convinced; his passionate glances, his reserve, his abstraction, proved it more eloquently than all the attentions of the adorers who crowded around her. How much more touching was the passion that sought concealment, and was content to suffer in silence, than the demonstrations, *affichés*, by the herd who offered incense at the shrine of her beauty. She longed, yet feared to hear him own his love. She already felt there would be more danger in listening to *him*, than in hearing all the flatteries ever previously poured into her ear; yet, in proportion to her dread, became her desire to be assured that her vanity had not misled her, and that she was indeed beloved by one who was capable of feeling the passion with all the fervour and romantic devotion which her youthful imagination pictured, and the absence of which, in her other admirers, had prevented her heart being touched by their adulation and assiduities. Lord Glastonbury, experienced in all the wiles employed by his treacherous sex when they would ensnare the heart of woman, marked with delight the interest he had created, but, fearful of dissipating it, he forbore to approach near to his idol, or to appear conscious that she observed his devotion to her. Like a skilful angler, who tranquilly lets his bait float until his prey is secured on the hook hidden beneath it, he kept at a distance, elated to find that, unmindful of the attentions of her other adorers, the eyes of the Duchess were continually directed to him, and that she became silent and abstracted in turn. Often did she determine to address him when she passed near where he stood, but as often did her courage fail. A vague presentiment of danger associated itself with his image in her mind, and even this undefined dread invested him with new interest and attraction. When present, he occupied all her attention; when absent, her thoughts continually reverted to him.

Chance sometimes effects that which, without its interference, might remain long in embryo, or never be accomplished. One night, on entering a ball room rather earlier than was her wont, the robe of the Duchess of Glenallen became entangled in the branches of an orange tree placed near a column, against which Lord Glastonbury was leaning. He came to her aid to disengage it.

"I fear I am so awkward," said he in a low voice, his trembling hands betraying his emotion. The Duchess bent down to assist in disentangling the lace from the branch, and their hands involuntary met. A deep blush mounted to her very temples, and was succeeded by an extreme paleness.

"Good heavens, you are ill!" whispered Lord Glastonbury, "let me lead you into the conservatory, the cool air there will revive you."

The Duchess took his arm; they walked slowly to the conservatory, and hope beat high in his heart as he felt her white and rounded arm, — which might have served as a model to a sculptor, so exquisite were its proportions, — tremble within his own. The coolness of the conservatory revived her, and they paused at a marble fountain in the centre of it, which threw up its silvery showers towards the roof of glass, through which the bright moon beams were distinctly seen descending, as if to mingle with the crystal showers. The rich perfume of the plants and flowers, the soothing murmur of the sparkling waters of the fountain, the distant sounds of the music, and the solitude of the spot, had a powerful effect on the feelings of the lovely but thoughtless woman, who, silent and trembling, dared not meet the impassioned gaze of Lord Glastonbury.

"Is not this a dream," whispered he, as he pressed her hand to his throbbing heart. "How often, loveliest, most adored of women, have I longed for a moment like this to tell you the secret that consumes my heart, that preys on my life. Pity me, oh, most perfect of created beings, and pardon a hopeless passion, pure as the lovely object that has given it birth! Why, why does an indissoluble barrier divide our destinies? We might have loved in innocence, in purity; but now, oh fool that I am to dream, that aught so divine as you could deign to look on one so unworthy as I am! yet, if a love deeper and more devoted than ever before filled the breast of man can merit pity, well do I deserve yours."

The Duchess shuddered, and turned her eyes on her companion for the first time since they had entered the conservatory. Those dark, lustrous eyes were filled with tears, and her face was pale as marble. A presentiment of evil filled her heart; a sense of her own weakness overpowered her. Conscience, even in that moment of passionate love, whispered,

that sin and sorrow (when were they ever far asunder?) would be the result of this interview; yet she had not strength to fly from the danger that menaced her. "Would that we had never met!" murmured she.

"Rather say, would that we were never more to part!" whispered her lover.

"Let us leave this place," said the Duchess; and a shudder shook her delicate frame.

"Oh! go not, until you pronounce my pardon for presuming to avow the burning passion that has so long consumed me. Trust me, loveliest of women, your honour is dearer to me than life. You have nought to dread from me. Have I not suffered in silence? have I not avoided, rather than sought you? and would I not have struggled on, enduring all the pangs of a hopeless passion, had not destiny drawn us *to-night* to this spot? Suffer me to love, to adore you! I ask no sacrifice, I require no reward. Pity, such as angels might accord to erring man, is all I crave; and *that* virtue need not deny. Only tell me that, had you been free, I might have hoped to aspire to the blessing of calling this hand mine" — and he pressed her snowy hand to his lips — "and I will ask no more."

"Oh! were I free," exclaimed the Duchess, her voice almost choked by emotion, "this hand should be yours, in the sight of God and man!"

"One word more, angel of my life: promise me that, should you ever be free — and the Duke's age precludes not this possibility — promise me that you will be mine, and only mine."

"I promise," whispered the Duchess; "and now, oh! now let us return to the ball room, my absence will be remarked! yet no, let us not enter the room together. I will go first, and you must go back through the ante-room."

Never previously had the Duchess had occasion to have recourse to a manœuvre like this. Her actions and movements, if open to the charge of levity, were free from even the thought of sin, or the dread of evil interpretation. An hour before, she would have derided the notion of fearing to enter the ball room with any of the admirers who always fluttered around her; but now she was no longer strong in the proud consciousness of her own innocence; she had listened to the

pleadings of a guilty passion — nay more, had avowed a reciprocity; and, sinfully anticipating the death of her husband, had engaged the hand which belonged to him, to another; and conscience whispered to her, that no longer dared she encounter the gaze of the crowd, as hitherto she had been fearlessly wont to do; and that henceforth, every look, every movement, must be guarded, lest she should betray, to the prying eyes of the malignant, the guilty secret of her love. Never, since the day she had approached the hymeneal altar, had she felt so timid, so embarrassed, as when, with unsteady steps, she again entered the ball room. The crowd, the heat, the blaze of light, and the joyous sound of the brisk music, overpowered her so much, that she was glad when one of the train of her admirers came forward, and offered her his arm. And yet, when she had accepted it, she regretted that she had done so, for it seemed like an infidelity to him on whose arm hers had so lately rested. What would *he* think, should he see her thus familiarly leaning on another? and, for the first time in her life, the Duchess felt that her actions would henceforth be subjected to the approval or disapproval of one to whom she had given a right to judge them — to one to whom she could only be bound by a guilty bond.

"Where have you been, lovely truant?" lisped Lord Henry Ellestree. "Your *garde du corps* have separated, and gone in various directions in search of you. Had any one of them been absent, while you were unfound, he would have been sacrificed by the rest, on the suspicion of having the envied honour and happiness of being with you; but as all answered to the roll-call, no jealousy was excited."

Accustomed as she was to the familiar tone of *badinage* of her admirers, never previously had it sounded so disagreeably to her ears as at this moment. It appeared to her as nothing short of insult; and the thought of how Lord Glastonbury would have been shocked had he heard it, increased her disgust.

"I have been rather indisposed," observed the Duchess, assuming an air of unusual coldness and reserve, "and sought relief from the excessive heat of the ball-room, which affected me the moment I entered it, in the conservatory, the freshness of which revived me."

"How cruel not to have given notice to your body-guard, who claim the privilege of attending you!"

"I would not accept royalty on condition of such attendance," replied the Duchess, in a tone of undisguised *hauteur*.

"Ungrateful sovereign! most despotic of all rulers! queen of hearts! is this your thanks to the chosen band who wear your chains and dispute your smiles?"

"A truce to *badinage*, Lord Henry Ellestree, I pray you; I am, in good truth, tired of the folly of those who waste their time, and make themselves, and me too, ridiculous, by the exhibition of their attentions."

"You are surely jesting, fair Duchess; you cannot be serious? To behold your Grace — unattended by your faithful *garde du corps*, would be as strange, as to imagine Venus, your prototype, unaccompanied by the Graces."

At this moment Lord Glastonbury approached, and took his usual station, at a little distance from her who occupied all his thoughts. She felt grateful for his consideration, in not coming to speak to her, though she longed for him to do so; and was obliged to exert all her self-control not to fix her eyes on him. He looked even more pale and serious than formerly, but there was an expression of deep tenderness in his glance when it met hers, that touched her to the heart. And now, those who had gone in search of the Duchess, through the suite of rooms, returned, and flocked around her, as had been their wont; each and all, uttering the most flattering speeches, on the anxiety they had endured through her absence, and the satisfaction experienced at finding her. But no longer were their adulations acceptable to her who had hitherto received them with pleasure. They had become perfectly irksome to her, and struck her now, for the first time, as approaching to impertinence. What would Lord Glastonbury think of this open and public homage to her? Might he not deem it a great liberty taken, and attribute levity to her for permitting it? She would not for worlds that *he* should think ill of her. Better were it that she should at once dismiss the flattering coxcombs around her, than inflict a single moment's pain on him, even though such a step might draw on her the enmity of the vain and giddy train who had elected her as the object of their adulation.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ACTUATED by these thoughts, the Duchess assumed a stateliness of demeanour, and a cold reserve in her manner, as new as they were unacceptable to her admirers, who looked at each other askance, to inquire the cause of this sudden and unaccountable change. Their troublesome assiduities were not, however, so easily to be got rid of, and as the Duchess turned with distaste from them, she wondered how she ever could have tolerated such folly. She forgot how often it had amused and flattered her, to see this train of young men of fashion haunting her steps, and disputing her smiles, while other beauties were left neglected, or occupied only the attention of one admirer. Lord Glastonbury, profoundly skilled in the female heart, many a one of which he had probed, dissected, and analysed, marked with inward satisfaction the alteration so visible in the behaviour of the object of his guilty love. Her youth, her exquisite beauty, her deep sensibility, and the artlessness with which it had been revealed, made an impression on him that surprised a heart grown callous from the number of attachments to which it had surrendered itself, and the brevity of their duration; but this new flame bid fair to burn longer and more warmly than any of the former ones, as its object was far more worthy of exciting a lasting passion. What a triumph would it be to his vanity to see the train of adorers, composed of the most distinguished young scions of nobility, who offered their homage to the lovely Duchess, slighted and dismissed for him! Yes, — the vain and heartless man, even in the commencement of an attachment, which would involve the peace and honour of a being, who, though giddy and fond of admiration, had never yet been pointed at by the finger of scandal, — nay, whose youth, inexperience, and position had conciliated the indulgence of society, and prevented its attributing evil to her somewhat open coquetry, could pause to think of the gratification of his vanity without one reflection on the certain consequences of it to her!

Oppressed by the new and tumultuous feelings that agitated her breast, the Duchess sate silent and *distraite*. She declined the repeated solicitations of her attending admirers to dance, though known to be passionately fond of that

exercise, and, fatigued and languid, she arose to depart long before the conclusion of the ball. She directed a look of adieu to Lord Glastonbury, so full of tenderness, that, as if unable any longer to control his feelings, he moved hastily from the spot he had occupied, and, advancing rapidly to her side, brushing past, as he did so, some of those who stood ready to dispute which among them should have the envied honour of leading her to her carriage, he offered her his arm, which she accepted, and they left the room.

The surprise of the rest of her admirers could only be equalled by their anger. They looked at each other aghast. "Strange!" "extraordinary!" "incomprehensible!" "*incroyable!*" broke from the lips of each, as their eyes followed the retreating steps of the lovely Duchess; and feelings of wounded vanity, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness, filled their minds towards the detested rival, who had stepped in between them and their idol, — who saw in this imprudent step, on the part of her lover, but a new proof of the extent and excess of his ungovernable passion for her.

"Pardon me, loveliest, dearest," whispered he, "for thus breaking through the restrictions imposed by my desire to preserve, from even a suspicion, a fame dearer to me, oh! how infinitely dearer than my own, nay, than life itself; but I could not resist the uncontrollable impulse. I could not see you depart, without uttering a few words of farewell. It was torture to me to behold the senseless herd, who flutter round you, enjoy privileges which I would die to possess, or to see this beauteous arm, the very touch of which thrills through my frame, confided to one of them. Say you forgive me; and, above all, tell me at what hour I may present myself at your door to-morrow."

The poor, inexperienced, and misguided young creature, to whom these words were addressed, was far from thinking that Lord Glastonbury's conduct was the result of premeditation, originating in a vanity that led him thus openly to display his influence over her, however detrimental the exhibition must prove to her reputation; and she went home, her heart filled by a guilty passion, and her mind in a tumult of delight, at the certainty that her feelings were reciprocated by the object of her unhallowed affection.

We will not attempt to paint the gradual progress by

which Lord Glastonbury led his victim from the platonic and romantic attachment, to which, at the commencement, he vowed his views were bounded, to the guilty one at which it arrived.

"Skilled in each subtle, wily art,
To taint with sin the mind and heart,
Till virtue, chased by sophistry
And reason, blind, no more can see
The gulph, which passed, the erring fair,
From transient bliss, wakes to — despair."

The conquest, although achieved, had not been as easily won as Lord Glastonbury had anticipated. Virtue still lingered in the breast of the Duchess, long after passion had gained entrance there; and a less practised and artful seducer might have been foiled in the attempts to pervert one, naturally prone to good, had she fallen into other hands. Steep and slippery is the descent from virtue to sin, when a guilty passion is permitted to plead its cause, to a heart which "though it loves the offender, yet detests the offence;" and so the Duchess found. Tired of a resistance, as disagreeable as it was unexpected, yet which, nevertheless, excited in Lord Glastonbury a still greater desire to subdue it, he at length declared his intention of leaving England, of becoming an exile, in the hope that, in a foreign land, he might regain the peace denied him in his own, where the sight of the object of his idolatry kept alive the passion that was consuming him. The Duchess, doubtful of her own strength to resist his pleadings, admitted, although it cost her many a pang, that, by a separation only could she preserve her own esteem, and the world's respect.

All was arranged for the departure of Lord Glastonbury, when, in a luckless hour, she consented to receive his farewell. That interview, which was to have been their last for years to come, perhaps, for ever, saw her fall from virtue; and her seducer, now master of her destiny, abandoned his project of exile, — if, indeed, he ever seriously entertained it, — and remained to enjoy the triumph he had achieved.

For some months the passion of Lord Glastonbury continued unabated; and the devoted attention and respect with which it was evinced, consoled, in some measure, the object of it, who, no longer entitled to her own esteem, watched jealously for that of him for whom she had sacrificed it. Many

and bitter were the pangs inflicted on her by conscience, even before she had any cause to suspect the truth of her lover; and often was her pillow steeped in tears wrung from her by the consciousness, that, however *he* might love, he *could not* respect her; and the belief, that the demonstrations of this sentiment, which marked his manner towards her, were only assumed to soothe her now morbid sensitiveness. There were moments, it is true, when, in gilded *salons*, in a blaze of light, and sparkling in diamonds, with the dulcet sounds of music floating around her, and the more dulcet flatteries of her lover filling her ear, that she forgot the remorse which, in hours of solitude and reflection, was preying on her heart, and abandoned herself to the pleasure that courted her. But brief was the cessation from wretchedness. Returned to her home, that home which she felt she had dishonoured, conscious that her very servants more than suspected her lapse from virtue, she would sink, pale and exhausted, into a chair, while her *femme de chambre* removed from her person the costly diamonds, that had excited admiration and envy among many of her sex that night, and would seek her couch, to which sleep had now become a rare guest. Her countenance soon bore evidence of the anxiety of her mind; her beautiful form lost its rounded symmetry, and her eyes their lustre. Her lover was not slow to observe the change in her appearance; but it awakened no tenderness in his cold and callous breast. He marked the effect, but he searched not the cause of the wretchedness endured by his victim. He surprised her often in tears which were, however, quickly chased away by his presence, for love still held the bandage over her eyes, that concealed the worthlessness of him for whom she had sacrificed so much, and rendered his visits a source of happiness to her. When, however, she attempted to reveal the state of her feelings to her lover, and tried to paint the remorse and inquietude that tortured her, he would accuse her of weakness, and reproach, rather than soothe her, until she at length found that she had no sympathy to expect from him; that she was regarded but as the plaything of his lighter hours, the object who was to minister to his pleasure, but with whose cares and sorrows he could take no part. These cares and sorrows began now to show their inevitable effect on the health of the Duchess; and her heartless lover, whose vanity

had been so highly gratified by the admiration her beauty excited, that his passion for her had been kept alive by seeing her the acknowledged idol of the circles in which they moved, now saw other women usurp her place, while she, wholly engrossed by her attachment to him, and the remorse it occasioned, made no effort to maintain the supremacy in society that constituted her firmest hold on his affections. Her tears and melancholy excited only his anger or *ennui;* her indifference to general admiration, he considered as a mark of little less than folly, and the *tête-à-têtes,* hitherto sought with pleasure, if not with the ardour that originally marked them, began, to use his own phrase, to be a bore to him. Habit, and a sense of delicacy to the feelings of the Duchess, alone induced a continuation of Lord Glastonbury's daily visits long after they had ceased to be at all necessary to his happiness; nay more, long after they had become irksome to him.

The Duchess marked his growing indifference, and the anguish it inflicted sharpened the pangs of remorse, which, even in the heyday of love, and while yet the object of it seemed to live but in her presence, made themselves so acutely felt. Keenly did she experience the truth of the axiom, which asserts, that unhallowed attachments, being founded on no stable basis, and unsupported by any of the props, such as mutual esteem, perfect confidence, and the world's respect, which serve to maintain conjugal affection when the first impetus of passion has softened down into a less warm, but more enduring sentiment, can have but a brief existence. And was it to be thus neglected, thus left to her own sad and reproachful thoughts, that she had violated the laws of virtue, and sacrificed for ever her own self-respect, and title to that of others? Wounded love, offended pride, and womanly delicacy prompted her to break at once, and for ever, with him who had won her heart but to torture it; yet she had not sufficient resolution to carry this suggestion of her reason into effect, and she still wore the chain that bound her to her seducer, although its iron had entered into her heart, and was daily, hourly, preying on her life. Often did the beautiful lines of Goldsmith recur to her memory —

"When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?

The only art her guilt to cover,
And hide her shame from every eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom, is — to die."

"Perhaps *he* would regret me, and mourn that he had been neglectful, unkind," would the Duchess say to herself, when in the solitude of her chamber she was left to brood over, almost to a moody madness, her own remorse, and her lover's altered conduct. "Oh! were I but sure that he would give a tear to my fate, — that I should be remembered with tenderness; yes, I would invoke death, all unfit as I am to meet it!" would she exclaim; "nay, I would anticipate the tardy approach of the pale king of terrors, and, by a draught of Lethean power, seek in the grave the peace I can never more know on earth."

Such were the fearful thoughts that filled the mind of this poor spoiled child of fortune; this idol of fashion, who was looked upon by hundreds of the giddy throng among whom she moved, as an object of envy, to fill whose place they would have thought no sacrifice too great.

By how many trifling incidents may a sensitive heart be wounded, and an estranged affection be revealed. The *bouquets*, which Lord Glastonbury had, during the first months of his passion, been wont to present to the Duchess every day when he paid his visit, had been composed of flowers the odours of which she preferred above all others, and with them a bunch a violets was always placed, as a symbol of the donor's desire that his passion should be veiled from the eyes of the world, as that flower seeks to hide itself from the vulgar gaze. These *bouquets*, of late, were so far less choice than formerly, as to bear evidence, either that the selection had been confided to some one ignorant of the allegory, for no more violets were sent, and the flowers she peculiarly liked were not only left out, but sometimes days elapsed in which no *bouquet* appeared, and Lord Glastonbury came not.

It was at this period that the faithless lover became captivated by a new object, who effaced from his fickle heart the image of one who had "loved him, not wisely, but too well." So engrossed was he by his new flame, that he scarcely bestowed a thought on his prior one, who, tortured by the pangs of jealousy and self-reproach, admitted that her punishment for forsaking the paths of virtue, though severe, was

well merited, and, coming through him who had lured her to sin, rendered it still more bitter. At one moment she determined to vent, when next they met, the reproaches which his inconstancy and ingratitude furnished but too much cause for. Yes, she would tear him from her heart, even though in doing so, the fibres of that agonized heart should be rent asunder. She would tell him to come no more, with false vows and deceitful smiles, to cheat her, but then returning love would master jealousy and anger, and tears, burning tears, would deluge those eyes lately so lustrous; and all the woman, the fond, betrayed woman, would resume its empire over sterner feelings.

CHAPTER XL.

And now was revealed to Selina the cause of the inequality of her unhappy mistress's spirits, the frequent traces of tears on her pallid face.

"Can you vonder, Mademoiselle, dat I live in terror of some terrible catastrophy?" demanded Madame Fanchon. "I never can believe dat *ce cher ange* is guilty of more dan a *grande passion* for Milor Glastonbury. I could not bear to tink ill of her whom I have held in dese old videred arms ven she vas a baby, and who I love better dan my life. *O mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* to tink dat her moder who is in Heaven, could have von daughter less pure dan herself, von child not vordy to go to her in Heaven. No, Mademoiselle, I could not, I dare not tink such a terrible ting possible. But yet, I do know dat she loves, madly loves dis Milor. I have heard her ven she vas ill, and I vatched by her bedside, call him by such fond names, and sigh so deep, as if her poor heart vould break; and I have trembled vid fear dat de *femme de chambre* who vas here before you came, and was so very *curieuse*, vould hear vat she said, and tell it to oders. Ah! Mademoiselle, de Duke very bad man. He not advise de *pauvre chère ange*. He not prevent dat *dangereux* Milor to come so often, vich he ought to do. Who can tell how strange is de human heart? Ven dis Milor Glastonbury used to come here every day, and stay hours vid de Duchesse, I did often vish he vould not come, and pray dat he might stay avay. But of late, ven I see dat he not come often, and dat she is more sad dan ever,

dat she looks paler dan before, and dat I see de marks de tears leave on her poor dear face; ah! den I vish he vould come, and blame him, and hate him more dan before for making her unhappy. I fear every ting. I find de blood run up to my very forehead ven de servants do mention Milor Glastonbury's name; and if von of dem smile, *O mon Dieu!* I feel I could beat dem. I do tink de Duke knows dat de Duchesse love dis Milor, and he vill some day tell her he knows all, and vow he vill believe her guilty of all de sin, vich I, who love her, cannot believe, and he vill make her give him all her fortune not to be disgraced, not to be *exposé* to de vorld. And I know de Duchesse is so *fière*, dat ven he say he believes her guilty, it vill eider kill her, or she vill leave de house, never to see him no more."

Many were the tears shed by Madame Fanchon during this confidential disclosure to Selina, who, shocked at the communication, though filled with pity for her unhappy and erring mistress, felt wholly at a loss what step to take. To remain with one whom she could not help thinking highly culpable, if not wholly guilty, was so contrary to her principles, that she felt disposed to invent some pretext for resigning her place; and yet, to abandon her mistress, when she was evidently suffering such wretchedness, would be, she thought unkind, ungrateful.

The next day a request from the Duke of Glenallen to see the Duchess, produced even an increase of agitation and inquietude on the part of that lady; and it was so evident, that Selina experienced the deepest compassion, when she beheld her mistress, with trembling limbs, proceed to the *boudoir* to meet her husband.

The Duke of Glenallen had been long a silent, but not unobservant spectator of the change in his wife's character. He had marked when she had abandoned general admiration and homage, for a deeper and more concentrated sentiment; but he held out no hand to snatch her from the fearful gulph which yawned to destroy her peace, and his honour; he uttered no warning to deter her from ruin. What, to him, was the certainty of wretchedness that must await a woman like his wife, when, having strayed from virtue, and forfeited her own esteem, she should too late discover the unworthiness of him for whom she had sacrificed herself? That

she never had loved, never could love *him*, he felt convinced. What, then, was it to him on whom she bestowed those affections that never could be his? All *he* required was, that she should not outrage *les bienséances du monde*, by permitting her lover to *afficher*, and compromise her in society, while *he* would make her comprehend that *his* silence and forbearance should be repaid by the absolute disposal of her large income being confided to him. The horror and contempt, excited in the mind of the unhappy Duchess, when her unprincipled husband revealed to her his knowledge of her sin, and the conditions on which alone he would consent to conceal it, are not to be described. Shame, deep and burning shame, crimsoned her cheek, and made her hide her face with her hands, while tears gushed through her fingers, and fell in showers on her tortured breast, without affording even a moment's relief to her bitter agony.

"Spare me, spare me, the deep humiliation of this hour!" cried she, her utterance impeded by sobs. "Why, why did you make no effort to save me from the toils that ensnared my youth, from myself? You might have entitled yourself to my respect, and have enabled me to preserve my own."

"Why this agitation?" said the Duke, "I did not mean to give you pain. Indeed I thought, young as you are, you could hardly believe that my eyes could be shut to that which was, through the unguarded and open display of your *tendresse* for Lord Glastonbury, made so manifest to all the world. A husband, though generally the last to be made acquainted with such matters, cannot be *wholly* blind, when decorum is violated, and his feelings overlooked. You have put it out of my power to plead ignorance of your conduct; but yet it rests with me, to *appear* as if I knew it not, and so enable you to retain your position in society. You now know the terms on which I will consent to this; and if you are wise you will not reject them." So saying, the Duke withdrew, leaving his wife a prey to shame and despair.

"What now remains to me?" demanded the Duchess, when left again to her own overwhelming reflections. "It was torture to meet the glance of my husband, while I believed him in ignorance of my guilt; but now, — now when he has declared his knowledge of it, how can I ever see him more? Had he reproached, spurned me, better could I have

borne it; but to have attempted to traffic with my sin, to make terms for the concealment of my shame, — oh, it is too, too dreadful! Where can I turn me for aid! An orphan, with no pitying mother's breast on which I could weep my sin, — no sister's heart to appeal to, to shield me from its fearful consequences, — no friend to lean on, what, — what is to become of me? Under this roof I cannot remain. I could not again submit to the degradation of hearing a price set on the concealment of my shame, and that, too, by *him* whose duty it was to protect my inexperienced youth from the dangers that beset my path, to save me from — myself. I was not hardened; I would have listened to his warning voice; I would have followed his counsel; but, with no pity for the poor wretch he had duped into a marriage so disproportioned, he allowed me to become an easy prey to the seducer, and to my own mad passion. O God! and have I lived to hear a husband propose terms like those he offered? Am I, indeed, so lost, so disgraced, that he should propose them, and I not die of shame in listening? To have impunity thus offered for guilt, is worse, oh! how infinitely worse, and more degrading, than open exposure by a justly exasperated but honourable husband. Had mine been such, I would have deplored my sin with burning tears at his feet, — I would have entreated permission to hide my guilt in some secluded spot, where my penitence might, after long years, efface a portion, at least, of the stain; and, if his pity were denied me, I would, without a murmur, submit to the sentence that sent me forth from his roof an outcast. But to confront a husband, whose silence may be bought with gold! Oh! it would be agony, and infamy, too great to bear. Better would it be at once to incur the penalty of guilt, to brave the world's contumely, so hard, so terrible for a sensitive woman to encounter, — to fly with the partner of my sin, and hide myself for ever from those who now flatter and follow me, than to remain beneath this roof, and meet again the Duke. I will write to Lord Glastonbury; I will propose to him to take me away from all this misery, this degradation. He is the only being on whom I have a claim, the claim of guilt incurred for his sake! There was a time when no day passed in which he used not to say, that his happiness would never be complete until I was all his own; — when *one* roof would shelter us, one destiny unite our

fates. But, woe is me, that time has passed. My remorse, and its results on the beauty that won him, have cooled his affection. How often have I marked with agony the change but too apparent in him! and yet, knowing this, must I urge a claim on his pity, or his honour, for the protection his love would no longer prompt him to offer me! Whichever way I turn, disgrace and misery await me. O God! O God! have mercy on me."

The Duchess's note soon brought Lord Glastonbury to her presence. There was an incoherence in it that alarmed him, *not* for *her*, (for, selfish and unfeeling, he cared little for his victim;) but for himself it greatly frightened him.

"There must be something wrong," exclaimed he, "some discovery made by the Duke. I hardly know whether I ought to go to her. Such a step may compromise me in some way or other. She is so cursedly romantic, so filled with false notions, that she is capable of any folly. Yet, if I do not go, she may take it into her head to come here; yes, by Jove! and fix herself on me. That would be a terrible affair. Had she done so at first it would have been different; and I sometimes wished her to elope with me then, when my passion was in its zenith. I dreamed of a divorce to be obtained by the Duke, and of my marrying her; no very bad speculation, as she possesses so large a fortune in her own right, which would be very convenient in the embarrassed state of my affairs. But *now*, when satiety has taken the place of affection, when her remorse, as she calls her blue devils, has broken her spirits, and made her a Niobe, always in tears, not thrice her fortune, large as it is, would tempt me to live with her. No, no, I am too well acquainted with the sufferings of poor Chattingham, who married the divorced Lady Alicia Evelyn, who has, ever since, been a Magdalen, weeping away her sins, and drowning his comfort in her tears. The world is more indulgent to male sinners than to females. It opens its *salons* to the first with a charity highly to be approved, while it rigidly excludes the second; that is, it is severe on the weak, as it always is, and kind to the strong. The excluded, left alone to reflect, feels it hard to bear that her husband should enjoy advantages from which she is debarred. If he stays at home with her, he becomes bored to death by her sadness. If he goes into society, she feels her-

self ill-used, The consequence is, that, having deeply considered the question, I have too much reason to rejoice that the Duchess did not take advantage of my proposals to fly with me during the first passionate days of love, ever to incur the chance of incurring such a heavy penalty again. But, I must go to her. Ye Gods! how bored I shall be. Already do I feel an inclination to yawn in anticipation of the interview. I see her face spoiled by tears, as usual; hear her voice tremulous, and broken by sobs, and — but no, I must not dwell on the scene I have to encounter, or I shall lose courage to go."

"What has happened?" were nearly the first words that passed the lips of Lord Glastonbury, as he entered the *boudoir* of the Duchess of Glenallen, whom he found more pale and agitated than ever, and whose hand trembled violently in his when he took it.

"The Duke has discovered all. Oh! I am a lost, a degraded woman," was the reply.

"The devil he has! I always feared it would be so. You are so imprudent, so *exigeante*. You would make me come here much more frequently than was prudent, would insist on my never leaving you in public, and would not, in spite of all my advice, burn my letters. You may blame yourself for all the *esclandre* that will take place. The fault certainly was not mine."

"These reproaches are now as ill-timed, as they are unkind," replied the Duchess, her face becoming suffused with a deep red, and then turning pale as marble. "As well may you reproach me for having loved you too well."

"My dear friend, this is not a time for sentimentality," said Lord Glastonbury impatiently. "What do you intend to do? for that is now the question."

"Can you ask? Oh, what remains for me to do but to seek refuge with the only being who has not a right to reproach me, or to deny me protection?" and floods of tears coursed each other down the pale cheeks of the Duchess.

"You must be mad to think of such a step; and I should be worse than mad not at once to tell you that it is impossible, and must not be thought of," replied Lord Glastonbury; with a vehemence that proved how firm was his resolution not to consent to the measure suggested by the agonized woman be-

fore him, who, terrified and shocked by his unusual sternness and violence of manner, sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. "You can go abroad until this *esclandre* is forgotten," resumed Lord Glastonbury; "you have, luckily for you, a large fortune, and that is a salve which heals the wounds inflicted on reputation so well, that after some years only slight scars remain. You can, after some time, come back and —"

"And you," interrupted the Duchess, her tears dried by the burning heat of her cheeks, "what do you mean to do? Am I to go forth alone to face a world whose contumely I have incurred by loving you to my own destruction?"

"Would you have me plunge you still deeper in a scrape?" demanded Lord Glastonbury; the Duchess shuddered at the mean and inappropriate word substituted for ruin. "Were you in a cooler mood to listen, I could give you a thousand incontrovertible reasons, many imperative with regard to myself, and most kindly meant with regard to you, why I must positively, now, and for ever, decline being the companion of your flight. If, as I suppose, you will be immediately driven from this house, let me advise you to go abroad. I will write to you often, and keep you *au fait* of all that is going on. Nay more, I will make an excursion to the continent during the recess from business, and spend a few days wherever you take up your abode."

While Lord Glastonbury was uttering this unfeeling speech, every word of which pierced the heart of the unfortunate woman to whom it was addressed, as if a dagger had stabbed her, she became sensible, for the first time, of the utter worthlessness of the man for whom she had sacrificed her honour, her peace, and the world's respect. To find, — and in her hour of need, — that he loved her not, — that he could contemplate their separation unmoved, — behold, nay counsel her exile from her native land, from that society whose idol she had been, until the consequences of her love for him had thrown her from the pedestal where she was wont to be worshipped, — to hear him designate the ruin of her reputation, of her peace, as a "scrape," was too much.

"Leave me!" said the tortured woman. "I will trouble you no more."

"Come, come, this is foolish. Do not think, that, because

I will not compromise you, and myself still more, by agreeing to your unwise, and, I really must say, absurd and preposterous plan of our living together, I am unmindful of your interest and happiness. I best prove my sincerity by firmly resisting your wishes on this occasion. You are unhappy at this moment, it is very natural that you should be so; but I, who am older, a great deal older, and have more experience than you, my dear friend, know that all this sorrow will pass away. Every strong passion does; their very intensity exhausts them. I remember when circumstances compelled me to break off with my first love, I thought I should never more know happiness, and for the first few weeks I *was* miserable. But, after a time, I became reasonable; people always do, and so you will, my sweet friend."

How often had Lord Glastonbury declared to the Duchess, that he never had *really* loved before he knew her! how frequently sworn, that no other woman had ever inflicted, or ever could inflict a pang on his heart. The belief in the truth of these assertions had been one of the strongest motives for her affection; and often had it been laid to her heart. To hear him now refer coolly to other loves, offer his own experience, to prove how easily the wounds of affection are healed and forgotten, was agony, was torture to the unhappy woman. She trembled so violently, and looked so deathlike, that even her false lover began to apprehend that *hers* was not a sorrow that could lightly pass away,—nay, some fears for her reason, and her life, flashed on him, as he looked on her agonized face. He would have taken her hand, but she waved him from her. "Leave me, I entreat you!" said she; "I wish to be alone. I shall soon be better; but at present I must be alone."

"As you wish," was the reply; for, piqued by her command to withdraw, the pity that was awaking in his selfish heart, became quickly chilled. "You can write me a line, if I can be of use," added he; and the door closed after him.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was long ere the Duchess of Glenallen moved from the spot, where she had sunk into a chair. When Lord Glastonbury left the room, Madame Fanchon, having heard of his

visit, went to Selina, and, with every symptom of alarm in her countenance, inquired where the Duchess was. "I know dat Milor Glastonbury is gone some time. De groom of de chambres told me so; and I expected to find de *Duchesse* here. Venever dat man come here of late she is always so sad after, dat I vant to be near her doe she not vish it. I have a dread of someting, I know not vat. I will go to de *boudoir;* and you, Mademoiselle, come vid me, and stay at de door, and if I call, you come in directly."

Selina accompanied Madame Fanchon to the door of the *boudoir*, as she was told; but no sooner had the latter entered it, than she uttered a cry, and Selina rushed into the room. They found the Duchess perfectly insensible, in which state she had probably been for some time; and, for a few minutes, they believed her dead. Madame Fanchon uttered piercing shrieks, and, in her terror and grief, lost all power of being useful, while Selina rang the bell, sent instantly for the family physician, bathed the temples of her mistress with cold water, and used every other effort in her power to restore suspended animation. At length the Duchess revived. Her heart beat feebly beneath the hand of Selina; she sighed deeply, and opened her eyes. The joy of Madame Fanchon now became as wild and unmanageable, as her terror and grief had previously been; and Selina had great difficulty in making her comprehend, that positive quiet was absolutely necessary to the Duchess. "*Cher ange! cher ange!*" exclaimed the poor old woman, dropping on her knees, and pressing the hand of her mistress to her lips, and bathing it with her tears.

Though animation was restored, and a faint pink hue replaced the pallid one that had overspread the face of the Duchess, consciousness was not yet quite restored. She gazed around her, looked at Madame Fanchon and Selina inquiringly, then raised her hand to her brow, as if to collect her thoughts, and, after a short pause, uttered a piercing cry; and again fainted.

The doctor soon after arrived, administered restoratives, and had her removed to her chamber, giving the strictest injunctions that his patient should not, for a moment, be left alone. He made various inquiries, as to the state of the Duchess previous to this sudden attack, — inquiries that

proved to Selina that *he*, like herself, was disposed to attribute it to some strong moral suffering, rather than to any physical cause. He remained with the Duchess until he saw her sink into a state of drowsiness, and was on the point of withdrawing, when the Duke of Glenallen entered the chamber.

"My God! doctor, what is all this?" said he, evidently in great alarm. "I but this moment entered from my drive, and heard that the Duchess had been taken suddenly ill."

"I really feel at a loss," replied the Physician, "not with regard to the peculiar character of her Grace's malady, but to the origin. I should attribute it to some sudden moral shock, some deep grief — but that I hear nothing has occurred to occasion any such emotions."

The Duke turned pale, opened the curtain of the bed, gazed intently on the pallid, but still lovely, face of his wife, then, dropping the curtain gently, an expression of the greatest alarm overspreading his countenance, he whispered the doctor, who, in return, shook his head, and uttered a few words *sotto voce*; and then both retired to the next room, to continue the conversation.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, how fortunate it was dat my heart did visper me to go to de *boudoir*. *Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! sans cela*, she might be now gone from us for ever. She has de heart *trop chaud*, *trop fier;* and dat vill kill her von day. *Cher ange!* she vas not used to chagrin, only for a short time, vid dat *méchante*, Madame Vestern. Ah! dat voman vas de cause of all dis misery. If she not have tormented *cette chère créature* more dan nobody could bear, she never run avay to marry de *rusé* old Duke; and I vould not like von stupid *vieux gobemouche*, have helped him to do it all. But, *Dieu sait!* I did believe it vas for de best, or I never lend myself in de affair; but oh! I now tink it vas all for de vorst,"

Selina took her station by the bedside, determined not to leave it; and great difficulty had she to prevent the garrulous old French woman from talking, for, though passionately attached and devoted to the Duchess, Madame Fanchon was so given to talk, that she could hardly remain silent a minute. The Duke stole into the chamber every hour to see how his wife was; and so great was the anxiety pictured on his face, that Selina, although greatly prejudiced against him by the previous communications of Madame Fanchon, could not help

pitying him. The old woman noticed this; and when he had withdrawn, after the fifth or sixth visit, shook her head, and whispered, "Ah, Mademoiselle, you are, like me, a *gobe-mouche*. You tink all dese visits are because he loves her. No, no; it is because he loves her fortune, and is afraid to lose it. *Mon Dieu!* ven von tink dat *cette belle créature* is not loved for *herself*, she dat has all to make her loved, it drive me mad. No, he tinks only of de money; and if he could keep dat, after her death, he vould be more glad dan sorry she should die. Oh! *c'est un vieux sans cœur, un égoïste.* You may believe me. Yet vonce he did so deceive me, dat I tought him de most kind, de most excellent of men, who only vished to marry Miladi Louise to take her from de power of dat odious Madame Vestern; and I did honour and esteem him for it. But ven I found out de truth, oh, *mon Dieu!* how I did hate and despise myself for having been such a *bête* as to tink vell of him."

And now the torpid state in which the unhappy Duchess had been for several hours plunged, changed into one of feverish excitement. She still slept, but her cheeks became flushed, and her hand burned. She spoke frequently, and the events that had occasioned the malady which now had seized her, occupied her mind even in the delirium that reigned over it. She raved of the dishonourable proposal of her husband, — of the heartless ingratitude of her lover. She called on death to release her from an existence now become insupportable, and on the Almighty for pardon for her sin. It was piteous to hear her incoherent ravings, and mark the change in her late pale face. One moment she would, believing him present, address Lord Glastonbury by the most endearing epithets — deplore that they had met too late to be joined in holy wedlock before God and man; — ask him if he could still love her when shame had set its stigma on her brow, and all who once esteemed her turned away in horror and contempt from her approach? The next, she would recal their last interview, utter the most cutting reproaches, and accuse him of having destroyed her here and hereafter.

The Duke entered more than once during the time she was uttering these frantic ravings of delirium, and his cheek, albeit unused to flush, grew red as he listened to them.

"She is evidently under the influence of a brain fever, and

knows not what she utters," observed he; "I must again send for the doctor."

"Ah! you know too vell dat she speak de terrible truth," said Madame Fanchon, when he left the chamber, "and you vill have to ansver before de throne of de Almighty for de misery you have brought on dis poor *orpheline*."

The doctor now declared that the Duchess was, as her husband had stated, suffering from a brain fever, and he called in three other medical men, of eminence in their profession, to assist him with their opinions. For many days it was their belief that their patient must sink under the violence of her disease, and there were hours in which so total was the prostration of her strength, that Selina thought her life could not last through the day. She watched over her, with a tenderness not to be described, bathed her burning temples with iced water, and applied cooling draughts to her fevered lips. Affection and intelligence enabled her to perform the functions of a nurse in a manner that surprised, while it delighted all present, and the doctors declared that they had never previously met with so able and judicious an assistant as in her. The Duke, whose anxiety won him the esteem of the physicians, repeatedly thanked Selina for her unceasing care of the Duchess; and the attached Madame Fanchon admitted that her skill as a nurse was far excelled by that of Selina.

"I not tink," would she say, "dat any Engelishe woman have such a power of endurance. She never tires, never vants to sleep, never complains, but dere she sits vid her eyes fixed on *ce cher ange*, and so still dat she never is heard to breathe, and if any ting is vanted, she glides about de room like a spirit vidout being heard to move. I do believe it is all because she speak so *leetle*. If she has any toughts, dey are all shut up in her heart, for she never lets dem out, and so she is not like me *fatiguée* from talking. It is de vay vid de Engelishe. Dey have not, like de French, fresh toughts coming into deir minds every minute, vich forces dem to speak de old toughts to give room for de new. No, dey have not de *esprit* like de French; if dey had, dey would be obliged to talk, as I do, and dat would *fatiguer* dem."

Such was the way in which the *amour propre* of Madame Fanchon accounted for the devoted and never-tiring zeal of

Selina in the sick room, and in which she satisfactorily, to herself at least, explained her own incapability to fulfil the office of nurse as Selina did.

Those only who have watched by the couch of one dear to them, during a malady that threatens, every moment, to snatch to the grave the object of their care, can be aware how, under such trying circumstances, affection and interest become tenfold increased, — and how the life of the anxious watcher seems to hang on that of the poor helpless creature struggling between life and death before her.

"How providential, O Almighty God," would Selina say to herself in the stillness of night, "are thy decrees. Thou who hast, by filling my heart with tenderness for this Thy suffering and erring creature, rendered that a labour of love, which Thy mercy has enabled me to support, but which, with less affection for her, I might have lacked zeal, ability, or strength to fulfil. Grant, O merciful God, that she may be spared to mourn, and atone for her sin, and so live for the future, to Thy honour and her own salvation."

At length a favourable change took place in the health of the Duchess, but not until she was reduced almost to a shadow, and so weak as to be helpless as an infant. Slow was her approach to convalescence, but it was marked by a patience and gentleness that indicated a great change in her character. No longer did she pray for the death which she now felt she was unfit to meet. She evinced gratitude to all who had contributed towards rescuing her from danger, but, most of all, to Him who had vouchsafed to open her eyes to her own errors and to lead her to seek to atone for them. Towards Selina she showed a sentiment of affection, which proved that, even while supposed to be unconscious of all that was passing around her, she was sensible of her tender and watchful care.

When able to leave her sick chamber, the Duchess declared her intention of retiring for some months to a seat of hers in a distant county. Her physicians approved the scheme, and persons were despatched to render the mansion fit for her reception. Before she left town, she had a long and touching conversation with the Duke, in which she censured her own, past conduct so severely, and dealt so mercifully with his that even his selfish nature was melted, and he asked her

forgiveness for having ever wounded her feelings, and promised never again to occasion her a moment's pain. They parted amicably, the Duchess appropriating a considerable portion of her large income to his use, and determined henceforth to make a better use of the wealth bestowed by providence on her, than she had ever hitherto done.

No longer treated as a domestic but as a friend, Selina now became the constant and useful companion of the Duchess. She read to her, and drew her attention to works calculated to strengthen her mind, instead of exciting her imagination. "The Book of Books, The Holy Bible," was every day opened, and in its sacred pages the wounded heart and tortured conscience of the Duchess found a balm. She soon learned to be thankful for the events that had, while nearly depriving her of life, awakened her to a deep sense of her own unworthiness, and of gratitude to God for his mercy. She frequently wrote to her husband, to exhort him to turn his thoughts from this sinful world, on the pleasures of which he had allowed them too long to be engrossed, and to prepare for that better life, to which by repentance he might still aspire. The answers of the Duke, though polite, and even affectionate, held out little hope to his wife that her appeals to his conscience had the desired effect. Nevertheless, a sense of duty led her to continue to exhort him, and, when informed some months after, that he was seized with a dangerous illness, she instantly left her tranquil abode, and returned to his habitation to administer to his comfort. She watched over him, as a duteous daughter would have done to a father. She prayed for him, and even won him to join with her in prayer. His death-bed, if not all that could be desired by one whose whole thoughts were now turned to another world, was not such as could deprive her of the soothing hope that he had benefited by her counsel, and profited by her prayers. He died, thanking her for her care, after having at her request, several times seen a worthy clergyman, and manifested an earnest attention to the spiritual comfort he administered, when all other views faded away.

There had been a time when the Duchess would have rejoiced in her release from the chain that had bound her to a husband so every way unsuited to her; but that time was

passed. Ever since the illness which had brought her to the verge of the grave, she had learned to view her own conduct with such sorrow and repentance, that she had become indulgent for his, and grateful that he had not exposed her error and sin to the world. In vain did Madame Fanchon, with less charity, endeavour to persuade the Duchess that the Duke's forbearance originated in a less worthy motive than that which she attributed to it. The elevated mind of her mistress not being prone to detect vice, to which it was a stranger, she remembered only the good derived from her husband's silence, and was not disposed to be ungrateful for it. The truth was, the danger in which her life had been placed had so alarmed the Duke, that believing her illness to have been occasioned by the communication he had ventured on in the interview that had preceded it, and which had so strongly excited her, he not only regretted the dishonourable conduct of which he had been guilty, but determined henceforth never to refer to it.

Her deep emotion on that occasion had revealed to him how much of what was noble and good still filled her heart. He remembered how blamable his own conduct towards her had been; how he had left her, when little more than a child, exposed to the dangers that must ever await a young and beautiful woman, with no husband to protect, no friend to counsel her, and his better nature, so long shut in by the thick envelope of selfishness that encased it, was awakened to a deep sense of pity for her, and blame to himself. Her generosity towards him previously to her retiring to the country, achieved her triumph over his newly-awakened sense of right; and had his life been prolonged, the Duchess would have found in him a true friend, anxious for her happiness, though incapable of forming it. The Duchess returned to her seclusion, and recommenced the life of study, broken in upon only by works of good, that had filled up her time before she went to London to attend her dying husband. She established schools, built an hospital, and large alms-houses, to be supported solely at her expense. She visited and relieved the poor, comforted the unhappy, encouraged the deserving, and sought to reclaim the erring.

Before three months of her widowhood had expired, a letter from Lord Glastonbury reached her. He had left

England the day after their last interview, fearful that some *esclandre* which might compromise his personal interests would take place. He looked on the Duchess as little less than insane, and capable of not only destroying her own position for ever, but of compromising his. To escape any future scenes, as he termed it, or any *exposé*, he went off to the continent, where pleasure had detained him, until he read in the newspaper the death of the Duke of Glenallen. This event produced serious reflections in his worldly and unfeeling mind. The Duchess, now free to dispose of her hand and vast fortune, had become a very different person to the wife whose husband might any day have exposed her, and compromised her lover. Her sin had not been revealed to the world. She had not lost caste, so he could by wedding her secure to himself the wealthiest heiress in England, a woman too, so beautiful as to preclude the possibility of the man on whom she bestowed her hand being accused of mercenary motives; and standing in so high a position in society as to reflect, rather than receive distinction, on whomsoever she might marry.

"And of this *bonne fortune* I am sure," said Lord Glastonbury to himself; "I am the only man she ever loved, ever committed herself with. She will be but too happy to redeem the only sin of her life by a marriage with the partner of it. I can persuade her that I left England wholly to save her reputation; that my sternness at our last interview was only assumed to prevent her ruin; and never did I love her so fondly, nor give her such an undeniable proof of my attachment, as when I declined to accept the sacrifice she was anxious to make, of flying with me. Women are so credulous, so prone to believe every assertion made by a man they love, that I feel certain she will receive all my explanations with perfect confidence, and I shall bear off a prize, of which every marrying man in England will envy me the possession. I am on the whole a devilish lucky dog, and now rejoice that Lady Julia Mordaunt did not accept my offer at Paris. Her fortune is not above one quarter the amount of the Duchess's, her person not to be compared, and she is ten years older. Yes, I am a lucky fellow!"

It was after indulging a train of reflections like the above quoted, that Lord Glastonbury wrote a proposal of marriage

to the Duchess of Glenallen. The letter was an artful one. It referred, but with the tact of an experienced man of the world, to their former attachment, and his desire that the only error of an otherwise spotless life should be effaced by a marriage that would redeem and sanctify it. He painted his unchanged passion in glowing colours, and his impatience to throw himself at the feet of the object of it, from which he was only deterred by the dread of compromising, in the slightest degree, her whom he hoped, when the required time for widowhood had passed away, he should lead to the hymeneal altar.

Never had the Duchess felt so indignant as after the perusal of this letter. The blood mounted to her very temples, and her lips trembled.

"And this is the man for whom I sinned! for whom I have for ever lost my own respect," exclaimed she; "oh! it needed not this fresh exposure of his unworthiness to humble me in my own eyes, to renew that repentance for my guilt which no time can efface. Wed him! No, not for worlds! not to buy even the concealment of my sin. Deeply as I deplore, and must ever lament it, and desirous as I am to bury it in oblivion from the world, rather would I brave the worst, — his revelation of it, and the scorn of society, than become his wife."

Her answer to his letter astonished almost as much as it enraged him. Incapable of comprehending or of appreciating a character like hers, he instantly came to the conclusion that some new attachment on her part could alone have led to her rejection of him. Under this impression he wrote to her again, insinuating rather than openly menacing, that if she ever consented to wed another, he would reveal her former *liaison* with him.

"How little does he know me," said the Duchess to herself, "if he believes me capable of deceiving any man who might address me as a suitor. No, never again will I marry."

CHAPTER XLII.

It was some time before the Duchess recovered her ordinary state of composure, so cruelly broken in upon by the heartless and indelicate letters of Lord Glastonbury. These new proofs of the baseness of the man she had once so sinfully

loved, overwhelmed her with shame, and increased her contrition; a contrition so deep and sincere, that she deemed a long life of repentance would not be sufficient to redeem her sin. Every hour of her life was passed in doing good, or in reading and reflection; and when Selina looked on this beautiful woman, not yet more than two-and-twenty years old, possessed of boundless wealth, descended from one of the noblest houses, holding such an elevated rank, and sought after by the highest and proudest, thus devoting her youth to the amelioration of the condition of the poor, and to penitence for one sin, a sin unknown to the world, she could almost have wept that one so naturally prone to good, should have been, by the force of circumstances, hurried into a crime, the sense of which deprived her of that happiness, which her personal and mental attractions, no less than her position, might have secured her.

The seclusion in which the Duchess of Glenallen lived, did not preclude her from the addresses of many of her former admirers. It is true, they did not, like Lord Glastonbury, presume to write to her until a year had elapsed after the death of the Duke. Many of these suitors were in every way unexceptionable; and all had enjoyed opportunities of knowing and appreciating her whose hand they were anxious to gain. The Duchess never hesitated a moment in declining their proposals, persisting in her resolution never again to marry. Many were the visits offered by former female friends, with sons, brothers, or nephews, for whom they longed to win the prize; but delicate health was pleaded as an excuse for refusing all visits, and at length the beautiful recluse, as it now became the fashion to call her, was left to enjoy in peace the solitude she preferred; her interested friends and admirers piqued into accusing her of eccentricity or affectation. This was the happiest period of the life of Selina, and would have left her nothing to desire, could she but have seen her beloved mistress less haunted and pained by the memory of the past. Treated more as a friend than a dependent, she learned to know the fine qualities of the Duchess, and with this knowledge her affection and devotion to her increased.

Months rolled away tranquilly, the Duchess pursuing the even tenour of her way, dispensing happiness around her, and almost worshipped by all who had opportunities of judging

her. Never was her name mentioned in any cottage, for miles and miles in her neighbourhood, that blessings did not follow it; and never did she lay her head on her pillow, without knowing that she had, during the preceding day, conferred benefits on all requiring her aid. Yet still the happiness diffused by her to others brought not that boon to herself; one fatal remembrance poisoned her existence, and embittered every hour of it.

And now a great change became apparent in the Duchess of Glenallen. Her health, which had continued delicate ever since her severe illness, began to betray such unequivocal symptoms of decay, as to seriously alarm Selina, and plunge Madame Fanchon into despair. A hectic cough, pain in the side, universal lassitude, and sleepless nights, too surely announced that remorse and grief had impaired, if not wholly destroyed her constitution.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle," would Madame Fanchon say, "*ce cher ange* will soon leave us, will become *un ange au ciel*, unless we can persuade her to go to London, and have a consultation of physicians. It break my heart to see her vid dat bright pink spot on her cheek, and her beautiful eyes so much more brilliant dan ven she vas in health. Vell did I know dat if ever she did vat vas wrong, she never could be happy any more. De vorld might pardon, but she vouldn't forgive herself. She believed dat her love for dat bad man vas to be almost excused by his goodness; and she judging him by her own noble heart, tought him perfect. It vas dis belief dat supported her against de stings of remorse, ven she tought he adored her; for even den dere vere times ven she vas so *malheureuse* dat I trembled lest she should go to de Duke and tell him all. But ven she found him so *ingrat*, so base, her sin did appear so moche de vorse in her own eyes, dat she no longer had courage to struggle against de regret dat has consumed her, for having lost her own esteem. Dere be dose, Mademoiselle, and de Duchesse is von of dem, who have de heart so noble, so fine, dat ven dey have lost deir own respect, dey cannot ever more have von moment's peace or health, and vont to be proud of de man for whom dey have lost it, and to believe dat *he* at least values de terrible sacrifice dat dey have made. But ven even dis belief is gone, and dat every excuse to satisfy deir own wounded conscience has

fallen away, den, oh! den, Mademoiselle, de proud heart break, de health goes, and dey die."

Often was Selina reminded of the last days of Lady Almondbury, as she contemplated the changed aspect of the Duchess — the same attenuated form, the same faded, yet still lovely face. A conviction of her danger had taken possession of the Duchess's mind, and its effect was a more constant attention to her religious duties, and a greater composure of spirits. Madame Fanchon urged her mistress daily to go to London for medical advice.

"It will be of no use, my good Fanchon," would she answer; "I feel that my days are numbered, and wish to end them tranquilly here."

At length her repeated entreaties induced the Duchess to consent to go to London.

"Poor old faithful creature!" observed her Grace to Selina; "although I know how useless it is, and dislike the fatigue of the journey, and leaving this quiet spot, I cannot refuse a request of hers, so continually urged."

The journey was undertaken; propped by pillows the invalid reclined in her carriage, Selina and Fanchon seated opposite to her; nor when they reached the railway, would she quit it, so much did she dread encountering the additional move, or meeting strangers. The coach — a roomy and commodious landau — was the last of the train, and, immediately before it was a box containing horses; they had only proceeded a short way when the movement of the carriage became so violent and unsteady, that its three occupants were filled with alarm. Something must be wrong, they felt persuaded; and, in a terror not to be described, they clung to the holders to avoid being dashed against each other. Selina looked out of the window, and screamed, to attract attention, but her cries were drowned in the stunning noise of the train, and the large vehicle, filled with horses, in front completely masked them from the carriages that preceded it. Every moment the movement of the coach grew more violent; and it now became evident to those within it, that the braces on one side had given way, for the body of the carriage was whirled on its side, half over the truck. The imperial, partly unfastened, swung from side to side as the coach, impelled along with a fearful velocity, was threatened every moment to

be shattered to pieces. The Duchess, thrown on the lower side, soon became insensible; Selina and Fanchon offered up prayers, deeming that all hope of mortal aid was now over, when, on entering a tunnel, the half-prostrate carriage was dashed with such violence against the side of the arch, that it was wholly disengaged from the truck, and shattered to pieces. Selina lost all consciousness the moment this occurred, and when restored to animation, found herself in a room, surrounded by half-a-dozen persons, who had all been occupied about her. For several minutes she could not remember what had happened, but gazed on the strangers in surprise. By degrees she became aware of her situation, and in alarm called for the Duchess—for Fanchon. Instead of her agonized inquiries being answered, she was told she must not speak; that she must continue perfectly quiet; and then she became sensible of great pain in her head, and in several parts of her person. She had been placed on a bench, near an open window, at one of the stations; and while she lay there, overcome by bodily torture and terror, the inquiries, unanswered by those around her, were solved by the conversation carried on outside the window. "We saw the coach thrown on one side," said the speaker, "and expected it would be dashed to pieces. We were on the bridge, and shouted, and ran with all our might, but, Lord bless you! what chance had we of overtaking the train that rushed madly on, as if the devil himself was driving it! or of our voices being heard, when that shrieking, puffing engine drowns every other sound. Oh, it was a terrible sight! And then, when we saw the train going to enter the tunnel, we knew it must all soon be over with the coach, which was overhanging on the right side of the truck, and sure enough, it was dashed up against the arch, and fell to pieces in a moment. In the shock it was disengaged from the truck. We shouted for assistance, and ran to the carriage. Oh, what a frightful sight it was to see! One of the women, they say it was the mistress, was quite dead. A piece of the wood of the carriage had struck her on the temple, and the blood had streamed all over her. Her death, they say, must have been instantaneous. The old woman opened her eyes once, looked at the dead lady, groaned, and never moved afterwards, although the doctors tried all their skill with both. The other young woman got a bad cut on the back of the

head, and is dreadfully bruised, but they say she may recover. 'T was lucky for her that the train stopped at this station, for there was no less than two doctors travelling by it, and they have been doing all they can for the poor young creature."

Selina listened with intense interest to the recapitulation of the fearful scene, in which she had taken a part, her eyes closed, as if to shut it out from her sight, and, as it concluded, she uttered a piercing shriek, and again relapsed into insensibility. For many days her life was in the utmost danger, and she was wholly unconscious of everything passing around her.

During that time a coroner's inquest had taken place, and the last mournful duties were performed to the dead.

Youth, and a good constitution, had enabled the poor sufferer to survive the injuries she had sustained, and the violent fever that had followed them; and when restored to convalescence, she found the kind-hearted Mrs. Steadfast watching by her bed. The husband of that worthy woman having read in the newspaper the details of the frightful catastrophe, had despatched her to take charge of Selina; and she had been many days with her before the invalid was aware of the fact. Her presence, and soothing attention, produced the most favourable effect. The state of bodily weakness, too, to which Selina was reduced, left her a passive, rather than a violent mourner, for the mistress she had learned to love so fondly, and the good-natured, poor Fanchon, from whom she had experienced nothing but kindness ever since she had known her. She would remain for hours lost in thought, questioning herself whether it could indeed be true, that the lovely being whose sweet voice still lingered in her ear, whose gentleness and considerate kindness had been evinced in a thousand nameless, but touching ways, ever since she had entered her abode, was gone for ever; and sincere and deep was the grief of Selina. Many were the tears shed by her as her thoughts dwelt on the terrible catastrophe that had deprived her of the best, the gentlest of mistresses. Although deeply grateful to the Almighty for the preservation of her own life, she could not be consoled for the loss of her mistress; and her sorrow, though not loud and boisterous, became a settled sentiment in her breast, the effect of which greatly retarded her recovery.

The mortal remains of the Duchess and her faithful old servant Fanchon had been removed for interment in the church adjoining her late abode, while Selina had been struggling between life and death in a brain fever. Frequently did the poor girl revert to the last time she had seen her, pale as marble, in a deep swoon, wholly insensible of what was passing around her. The frantic cries of poor Fanchon, the terrible velocity of the movement of the vehicle that contained all three, until the final crash, were remembered as a fearful but vivid dream that haunted her. And now — all was over.

Again she was houseless. Her beautiful, her good mistress was gone, she humbly hoped, to that Heaven to which her deep and never-ceasing remorse for the one sin of her young life had entitled her. Yes, penitence so sincere must plead for her before her Almighty and merciful Father; and this confidence in the bliss she was now enjoying became the only source of consolation to Selina.

When able to be removed she accompanied Mrs. Steadfast to London, and in a few days after despatched a note announcing her arrival to Mrs. Fraser. In her present state she longed to see that amiable and gentle being, and was not without a hope that she might again enter into her establishment, so warmly had that lady pressed her to do so when she had last seen her. The note was brought back by the messenger, with the intelligence that Mrs. Fraser, with her mother and sisters, had gone abroad, and were not expected back to England for a year. This news inflicted a severe disappointment on Selina, for she had counted much on receiving comfort from her for whom she entertained so sincere a regard.

Mrs. Steadfast, alarmed by the continued weakness of Selina, called in a skilful physician, who, made acquainted with the recent affliction she had experienced, advised to have her removed to a milder climate, which, with a total change of scene, he thought would be the most effectual means for her restoration to health.

But how is this advice to be carried into effect? thought the excellent couple, under whose roof Selina was sojourning.

"Let us wait, my dear, until she gets a little better," said Mrs. Steadfast to her husband, "and we may hear of some

lady going abroad, and requiring an attendant. I often read in the newspaper inquiries of this nature."

"In the meanwhile," replied her husband, "we must manage to get Miss Stratford into the fresh air as much as possible. Our son is such a good steady lad, and drives so carefully, that he can take her out for a couple of hours every day in our gig, and that will set her up."

This kind plan was carried into execution, and in the course of a few weeks the glow of health, which revisited the cheeks of Selina, and her returning strength, proclaimed how judicious and advantageous it had proved. Yet returning health did not restore her broken spirits; and as her kind host and hostess marked this, they bethought themselves of the physician's advice of change of scenery to divert the invalid's mind from the painful topic that unceasingly filled it. They inquired among their friends; looked into the advertisements in the newspapers, and at length found one that seemed likely to suit their young friend.

"A lady of distinction," so stated the advertisement, "about to visit the continent, requires a young person of good education to fill the place of *femme de chambre*. She will be expected to read aloud to her mistress, to act occasionally as her amanuensis, and to keep her accounts."

"Why it seems the very thing, my dear," observed Mr. Steadfast. "How very few *femmes-de-chambre* could be able to fill this double capacity, and Miss Stratford happens to be precisely one of the few."

"Yes, she is indeed, and I trust she may be engaged," said his wife.

The advertisement was answered, an appointment made, and Selina, in consequence, waited on the Lady Caldersfoot. The house was one of small dimensions, but of great pretension, situated in Wilton Place. The hall was covered with plaster brackets, on which stood innumerable diminutive casts of the most celebrated works of antiquity. The staircase was decorated in a similar style; and in the drawing-room, into which she was ushered by a footman in a livery more remarkable for gaudiness than good taste, the walls were nearly hidden by a number of pictures, so execrably bad, that the eye of Selina, lately accustomed to look on works by the best masters, turned from them with surprise,

and a conviction that the taste and knowledge of their owner must indeed be very defective. To the frames of these vile daubs were affixed the names of the most remarkable painters, to whose style and manner they did not present even the slightest resemblance. They had not even the merit of being bad copies of the masters. Coarse Dutch furniture, painted brown, and picked out in gold, as the dealers term it, next attracted her attention; the chairs and sofas covered with stamped cotton velvet. The curtains were, as upholsterers say, to match, and the table-covers of the same material. Mirrors, of small dimensions, in brown and gilt frames, decorated the room. On the mantelpiece and tables were placed various articles of China, of a quality that would have thrown the author of Vatheck into a fever, such wretched specimens were they, mixed with a quantity of trumpery, the refuse of cheap *bric-à-brac* shops, but which were labelled as the productions of Benvenuto Cellini, and the masters of his time. German glasses, of fantastic forms, were marked as *crystal de roche:* and old metal boxes incrusted with false stones, that could not impose on any one for the real, were placed under glass shades; as if things of some value. A few very ill-painted miniatures were scattered around the tables; and a gaudy carpet, of so thin a substance as to betray the forms of the boards of the floor beneath it, completed the *ensemble* of the room in which Selina was left some twenty minutes before Lady Caldersfoot made her appearance. A striking similarity between the room and the owner instantly struck Selina, for in both brown and gilding predominated. The lady herself, of a brown colour, was attired in brown silk, not remarkable for its freshness. Her curls — and they were evidently only hers by right of purchase — were brown; and chains and bracelets, of what, in modern advertising phraseology, is termed mosaic gold, completed the costume of a most remarkably ill-looking old lady.

"Ah, Miss Stratford!" said she, examining Selina through her eye-glass; "I believe I am right, your name *is* Miss Stratford." Selina bowed assent. "Let us go into my library. I never feel so comfortable anywhere else;" and she led the way to a room that opened into the drawing-room. "Pray be seated."

The library, as it was termed, was a large closet, lined with

book-shelves, on which stood, ranged in goodly show, rows of half-bound novels and periodicals. Nothing could be more meretricious, or in worse taste than this room; the hangings, the chairs, and sofas, crowded into it, leaving hardly space to move, were of the most ill-assorted colours; the window-panes were pasted over with gaudy-coloured paper, in imitation of stained glass, and the table was littered with inkstands, presented, as Lady Caldersfoot took care to inform Selina, by the greatest men of our time, in recognition of her talents, and in gratitude for the delight and instruction their exercise had afforded them. Selina could not help remarking, that, if the good-will of the donors of these gifts was to be estimated by their beauty or value, it could not be very great, for the inkstands were mere trumpery, such as may be found at any of the cheap repositories for modern antiques.

"Of course, you know my writings?" said Lady Caldersfoot.

"I have not that pleasure, Madam," replied Selina. "Hitherto, my reading has not included works of fiction."

"How very strange! I had thought that a person could not have been found in this country, or, indeed, in Europe, unacquainted with my writings. Of course, you have heard of my literary reputation?"

Selina again bowed an assent, for which her conscience reproached her, but which prudence exacted; for, short as had been her acquaintance with Lady Caldersfoot, she had seen enough of her to be aware, that, to confess the fact of never having heard of her Ladyship's fame, would be deemed nothing short of an offence of deep dye.

"Fame, as the divine Dante says, Miss Stratford, is not to be lightly won. Mine has been purchased at the cost of health. Nightly vigils, passed in poring over the works of philosophers and sages, and days spent in giving to the world the fruits of my studies, after their passing through the alembic of my mind, have impaired my health. The old story, the sword has worn out the scabbard; and I must seek a more genial clime to renovate my frame. You speak French and Italian fluently, I suppose?"

"Tolerably, Madam."

"You write a legible hand, I know, by your answer to my advertisement. Your appearance proves a superiority over

the ordinary class of persons offering themselves as *femmes de chambre*, and this peculiarity suits me; for, such is my respect for literature, that I think no lady, devoting herself to that noble profession, should have her person approached by a mere menial. Her hand-maiden should be a person of refinement, of education, capable of comprehending the elevated thoughts and lofty aspirations she may be called on to copy on paper."

Selina listened with surprise to this exordium, delivered with an affectation of manner that rendered it perfectly ludicrous.

"What are your terms, Miss Stratford?"

"Forty pounds was the sum I received in both my last situations."

"That is a great deal; but I suppose the ladies you were with, were not literary, had not, like me, achieved fame, consequently you had a right, where no lustre could be reflected on you, to receive a higher remuneration for your services. With me it will be wholly different: a portion of my celebrity will extend to you; and, therefore, you will not think me unreasonable, if, instead of forty, I offer you twenty-five pounds, which sum I never exceed. Indeed, I could find many young persons, who, for the sake of approaching my person, would gladly come without any salary; but I prefer you."

Amused by the absurdity and pretensions of the lady, Selina felt disposed to accept the terms offered. To go to a new scene, and a better climate, were strong inducements, in her present weak health and depressed spirits; so she acceeded.

"With whom did you last live?" inquired Lady Calderfoot.

"With the Duchess of Glenallen," replied Selina; and tears filled her eyes as she uttered the name.

"What! the beautiful Duchess of Glenallen, who met such a fearful death some weeks ago?"

"The same, Madam."

"And you were the young person so miraculously saved? Why, the whole thing was one of the most remarkable, most tragical catastrophes in modern times. Not that such accidents are not common enough in our days; but a Duchess, a young, a beautiful, and a rich Duchess, who had retired from

the world, rejected suitors by dozens, and all on account of grief for the death of a very dissolute man, old enough to be her grandfather, makes all the difference; it changes the whole thing. I was really thinking of turning the event to account, of writing a novel, to be entitled, 'The Inconsolable; or, the Railroad Disaster.' I had even traced out a few sketches in my note-book. I had described the last scene, when, conscious of her impending destruction, she cried out, 'My beloved, I come to thee!' Yes, I shall be delighted to have you, for you can of course give me every particular, and then I can idealize the whole. Mere facts are nothing, everything must be placed in a romantic, a dramatic point of view; and in effecting this I shine."

Selina's astonishment was so great, that it revealed itself in her countenance, and Lady Caldersfoot, observing it, said, "I see you are surprised. This is because you have not lived with persons of genius. They seize, and make their own, all that can be worked up into books, and do it so admirably, that even those, who enacted the *rôles* they describe, can hardly detect them when they peruse the work. Glorious attribute of genius! that can invest common, or even painful circumstances, with an interest that it only can create."

The engagement was made, the reference to Mrs. Steadfast was found satisfactory, and Selina entered her new situation three days after.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THREE days after Selina entered the establishment of Lady Caldersfoot, that lady, attended by her and a man-servant, left Wilton Place for the Continent; which event, the evening previous to their departure, was notified by her Ladyship's own pen in the following terms, and despatched to a fashionable morning paper for insertion.

"Among the recent departures from town we have to announce that of the Lady Caldersfoot and suite, who left her Ladyship's elegant and classic residence in Wilton Place this day, *en route* for the Continent. It is said, we know not with what truth, that this celebrated authoress and charming lady will occupy her graphic pen on a work of great importance, connected with the progress of literature and the fine arts in

France and Italy, which no person is so capable of tracing as her Ladyship, whose profound knowledge and exquisite taste, as well as deep erudition, peculiarly fit her for the task. The distinguished *literati* in all the capitals through which this celebrated lady will pass, will no doubt eagerly seize the opportunity afforded them of offering their homage to the English Corinne."

Instructions were left, that several copies of the paper were to be forwarded to Paris after her Ladyship, in order, as she explained to Selina, that publicity should be given to her movements in other countries as well as in her own.

Arrived at Dover, Lady Caldersfoot proceeded to the Ship Inn, where she instantly summoned the proprietor to her presence.

"Pray, Sir," said she, "is the Governor at present at the Castle?"

"No, Madam, he left yesterday morning for town."

"How very unfortunate; but it is all my own fault. I should have apprised him that I was coming, and then he would have taken care not to be out of the way."

The innkeeper looked at her Ladyship with surprise, for neither her own appearance, nor that of her carriage or servant, had impressed him with a very high opinion of her grandeur.

"It may be as well, Sir," resumed the lady, "that you inform the civil and military authorities here of my arrival. They probably may wish to mark their respect by some of those attentions usually paid to persons of distinction, and might feel hurt if left in ignorance of my being here."

"Who shall I say, Madam?" inquired her host.

"The Lady Caldersfoot. Of course you know my name."

"I can't say, I do, your Ladyship; but so many lords and ladies pass through here, that I can't remember names."

"Do you never read, Sir?"

"Oh! yes, your Ladyship, the newspapers, I hav'n't time for anything more."

"But, surely, in the newspapers you must have seen reviews of my works, or extracts taken from the evening papers.

"Perhaps, my lady, I may, but as I did not know your Ladyship's name, I can't be certain."

"I am Lady Caldersfoot, and my celebrity, has, I believe, I may say, become European."

"I make no doubt, your Ladyship."

"Will you order your best room to be prepared for me? People will be here after, if not at present, curious to see the room and bed I slept in. A day may come when fragments of the curtains of the bed in which I have reposed, will be purchased, as those of Voltaire's at Fernay have been." The innkeeper looked confounded. "Send my domestic," continued Lady Caldersfoot, "and have a roast chicken and half a pint of Sherry served up for my dinner. If my arrival here becomes generally known, many persons will doubtless apply for my autographs; this generally occurs wherever I go, and as I do not like to refuse, you may be the medium of applying for them; and now you may withdraw;" which Mr. Boniface did, evidently not a little puzzled what to make of his strange guest.

Thomas Whitlecombe, the footman, now made his appearance, bowing and pulling the forelock of his hair. Thomas was a new servant, having been sent up from one of the provinces only ten days before, and was as little skilled in the usages of a London footman as in knowledge of the world. He believed his mistress to be a very great lady, whose orders he must strictly obey, and he was utterly incapable of judging the propriety or absurdity of them.

"Thomas," said Lady Caldersfoot, "I am now going to a foreign land, and, to spare disagreeable comments, it will be necessary for you to change your name from the rustic one of Thomas to Theodore. Both names begin with a T, so that the mark on your clothes need not be altered. Remember, therefore, that from this day forth you are to answer only to the name of Theodore."

"But please your Ladyship, if how be as I was taken up for going by a false name? I have heard it is against the law."

"No, there is not the least danger of that, so you need not be alarmed. And, now, mind what I say. When you go down stairs, be particular in talking of me as much as possible in the servants' room, or in the tap."

"Oh! my lady, would that be right? Why, if your Ladyship will believe me, I was almost agoing to blow up two chaps

and a couple of women-servants in the room down stairs, for talking of their masters and mistresses. Lord bless us, what things they did say!"

"You mistake my instructions, Theodore. I don't mean you to talk as they did."

"God forbid, my lady; for I wouldn't do such a thing for all the world."

"No, Theodore, you are merely to say that you have the honour of serving the most celebrated lady in England, the greatest authoress."

"And if I may make bold to ask, what is an hauthoress, your ladyship?"

"A lady who writes books, and instructs the world. You are to say that in London all eyes are turned on your mistress; that the most costly gifts are sent to her by those delighted with her writings, and that publishers buy them at the greatest prices."

"I 've been a thinking, your Ladyship, that if you 'd write down all you have told me to say, in large writing, I 'd have it cried by the town-crier; he 'd do it for a couple of shillings, and that would make it known better than all I could say, for I 've not got a good memory for remembering hard words, or saying much at a time."

"*Quelle bête!*" muttered the lady, while Selina felt the greatest difficulty to avoid smiling. "No, no, Theodore, the town-crier must not be thought of; but it is positively necessary that you make all the persons you meet, know that your mistress is a grand lady and a great authoress."

"Dang it all," said Thomas, scratching his head, "I wish I may be able to remember that word hau-hauthoress. If it was put down in a plain hand, I 'd learn it by heart, so I would."

"Print it for him, Miss Stratford."

Selina did as she was told, and Theodore, as he was henceforth to be called, retired, spelling over as he withdrew, the word written down for him.

"And now you had better go and see my room arranged," said Lady Caldersfoot, "you can inform the landlady or housemaid, or both, who I am. When persons of celebrity like me, travel, every one is curious to learn something about them. I have ordered a chicken for my dinner; half of it will

be quite sufficient for me, and the other half I will leave for you. This will save money, so come down in about a quarter of an hour after my dinner is served; I will then have finished, and you can take my place, and as I shall order a dumb waiter instead of a living one, nobody will be the wiser, and I shall have only one dinner to pay for instead of two."

The meanness of this proceeding was so extremely disagreeable to Selina, that she would have preferred going without a dinner to adopting it; but she saw that Lady Caldersfoot was not a woman to be reasoned with, — and, what was more, that she would resent any remonstrance. One part, however, of her Ladyship's instructions Selina did not comply with, namely, she did not enlighten either the hostess or the chamber-maid on the celebrity of Lady Caldersfoot, although the former threw herself in her way with an evident curiosity, probably excited by the communication made to her by her husband after his interview with the lady.

"How many is the table to be laid for, Madam?" inquired the quick, bustling waiter, who, with a table-cloth and napkin in one hand, and a knife-tray in the other, entered the room.

"For one only; and, as I don't like attendance at dinner, place a dumb waiter near my chair."

The waiter obeyed the order, and in due time the roast chicken was served. Whether Lady Caldersfoot's appetite was more than usually keen, or that the chicken was unusually small, cannot be well explained; but the result was, that so slender a portion of the carcass was left for Selina, the legs and wings having totally disappeared, that a bird, however delicate, would have been exposed to no danger from repletion had he picked it.

"Don't use a plate, the dish will serve as well, and prevent observation," said Lady Caldersfoot. "Sit down in my chair, and I will look out of the window while you dine."

Selina felt like a receiver of stolen goods while she eat the small share of food left for her, and was so apprehensive of being detected in the operation by the waiter, that she hurried through it as rapidly as she could.

"As you never drink wine," observed Lady Caldersfoot, "I need leave none for you." And taking the decanter, she emptied the portion of its contents which she had not con-

sumed, into one of the *flacons* of her dressing-box, which she had kept in the room, as it now appeared, for the purpose. "As one must pay for every thing in an inn," continued she, "I always make it a point to have the value of my money. You may now retire to your room, and I will ring for the waiter to remove the things," pointing to the fragments on the table.

The host and hostess of the inn, no bad judges of appearance, had on seeing Selina set her down as a lady. When, however, they found that she was not to dine with Lady Caldersfoot, and that she had assisted the chamber-maid in arranging her Ladyship's room, they began to think she must act in the capacity of *femme de chamber*.

"Well, there is really now no means of judging who persons are by their dress or air," said the hostess; "I could have sworn the young person was a gentlewoman."

"Yes, she is indeed more like one than that crazy old woman she accompanies," replied the husband.

"The poor thing looks much too genteel to be put in the servant's room with the others," observed the hostess.

"I think, my dear, it would be as well to ask her to dine with us."

"Just as you please, my dear."

"And," resumed she, "I havn't the heart to put her into one of those dark closets, into which we generally thrust ladies'-maids. No I'll let her keep the room next her mistress's, which I had chosen for her when I believed she was a lady, and I'll step up and ask her to dine with us."

Grateful for this civility, Selina politely declined it, alleging a headach, which she really had, as an excuse. Her spirits were depressed, for she could not help contrasting the treatment already experienced from her present mistress, and the prospect of a continuance of it, with that received from her lamented one, the Duchess of Glenallen, or the kind and amiable Mrs. Fraser. To be the companion, nay more, the servant of so very absurd and ridiculous a woman as Lady Caldersfoot, was highly mortifying, and must inevitably expose her toconstant annoyance. While making these reflections, she was summoned to the presence of that lady.

"I wish to walk on the Pier," said she; "the news of my arrival has doubtlessly spread, and people will be impatient to see me. I will call at the circulating libraries, and inquire

for my own books. I always make it a point to do so when I am travelling — it helps the sale; and I enjoy the surprise and delight of the librarian when I disclose who I am."

The dress of Lady Caldersfoot was more remarkable for its variety of colours and meretricious ornaments, than for richness or good taste; and assorted so ill with her plain and highly rouged face, as always to attract an attention that would have been anything but agreeable to most women, but which she considered as a homage paid to her imagined celebrity.

Selina soon found herself painfully embarrassed by the rude staring directed towards her companion, who, instead of being distressed, or attributing it to the true cause, was evidently much gratified, and observed, —

"It is quite clear these good people know who I am, for you see how they follow me. This is one of the consequences of fame; but I am so accustomed to it, that I rather look for than seek to avoid it."

"Ah! here is a circulating library," and entering it, she said, "Pray, Sir, have you got 'The Delicate Dilemma?'" and Lady Caldersfoot addressed the librarian, assuming an air of mingled dignity and condescension.

"Yes, Ma'am, I know we have it; but it is so little inquired for, that I really hardly know where to put my hand on it."

And the man commenced searching for the work. Selina stole a glance at her Ladyship, on whose countenance anger and indignation strove for mastery.

"If you cannot find 'The Delicate Dilemma,'" observed she, "let me have the 'Foibles of Fashion,' by the same distinguished authoress."

"I'm very sorry, Ma'am, but I have not got any other of the works of Lady Caldersfoot. Finding that they are never asked for, I don't order them. Indeed, the one I am looking for, has been always sent back to me in a few hours, with an observation that it was unreadable."

"Which proves," said Lady Caldersfoot, "that your subscribers must be wholly deficient in taste and judgment." And she walked with a stately air out of the shop, leaving its proprietor perfectly astonished. "What an idiot that monster in human shape is," observed the angry authoress. "I was

half tempted to declare my name, and overwhelm him with confusion. What Goths the inhabitants of Dover must be! But let us proceed to another circulating library."

In their progress in search of one, Lady Caldersfoot continued to attract so much attention, that her companion felt really ashamed.

"That must be some old French woman painted up and dressed in such an outlandish fashion," said a rough-looking sailor to another, as they passed, rudely staring at Lady Caldersfoot.

"My heyes," observed a second passer-by, "what a crazy-looking old frigate!"

None of these insulting comments escaped the ears of the person to whom they were directed, and so greatly did they irritate her, that Selina, although fully sensible of, and disgusted with, the vanity and folly which had occasioned them, pitied Lady Caldersfoot. They entered a second circulating library, and, as in the former one, the lady inquired for one of her novels. The same, or nearly similar, answers were given to her; and now her indignation conquering her prudence, she told the owner of the shop that his subscribers must be the most stupid and tasteless readers in the world not to have demanded the writings of so celebrated an authoress.

"Why, as to that, Madam," replied the man, piqued into anger by her sweeping censure on his customers, "I believe my subscribers are rather above than below the general class; for as Dover has a continual succession of distinguished and fashionable stationary visitors, as well as those who pass through, going to, or coming from France, there must surely be some good judges of literature among them, and I have never before been asked for the works of the authoress you have named."

"You have surely seen the reviews on these works," said the lady, "and the frequent complimentary mention of them in extracts in the newspapers taken from evening papers?"

"Yes, Madam, I have, but such puffs have no influence here. A good-natured editor often speaks favourably of books of which his opinion is quite different; and extracts from an evening paper, we all know to be nothing more nor less than paid advertisements from the publisher. Then,

Madam, we are all aware that publishers have vehicles of their own for puffing works when editors or critics in the regular line are too honest to help them to sell bad books by praising them."

"And pray, Sir, how did you acquire this intimate knowledge of the secrets of publishers?" demanded Lady Caldersfoot haughtily.

"By having lived some years with a fashionable publisher in London, Madam," was the reply.

"I will not give you any more trouble, Sir," said Lady Caldersfoot, leaving the shop, angered beyond measure by the disclosure made by the librarian, and especially in the presence of Selina, whom she wished to be deeply impressed with the value of extracts from evening papers and favourable reviews. That *she* should now be let into the secrets of publishers, a circumstance which must lower the fame of her mistress in her eyes, was most vexatious, and quite disgusted with Dover Librarians, she retraced her steps to the inn. In the hall she met the proprietor, and inquired of him, "Whether he had notified her arrival?"

"Yes, my Lady."

"And what has been the result?"

"I was told, your Ladyship, that your coming or going was nothing to the authorities. It was only to Royalty or Ambassadors that they were to pay honours."

"Didn't you tell them who I am — what my celebrity is?"

"Yes, my Lady, and they laughed in my face, and asked me who told me of it? and when I answered, that I had it from your Ladyship's own lips, they laughed more and more, and so I came away."

"Brutes, illiterate brutes!" exclaimed the lady, "have any requests for my autographs been made?"

"Not one, your Ladyship; and though I offered them to all the travellers in the coffee-room, just out of civility, no one wanted them."

"Well, this is most extraordinary, most unprecedented, I must say, and proves that there must be no appreciation of literature, or those whose works adorn it, in Dover. Be so good as to send my domestic," and Lady Caldersfoot, with an air of the utmost dignity, ascended the stairs. The man soon appeared, his face flushed, and his eyes emitting a lustre

very unusual to them. "I sent for you, Theodore," said his mistress, "to inform you, that I will sail by the morning's steamer to Calais. Go, and secure passages for me and my suite; mind you say, — the celebrated Lady Caldersfoot and her suite!"

"Yes, your Ladyship, but I hope you do not expect me to tell 'em that your Ladyship is a hauthoress."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because it may get me into trouble, your Ladyship."

"Get you into trouble!" repeated the lady, in astonishment.

"Yes, my Lady. Why I have had such a piece of work in the servant's room as I never had in all my born days, and all because I did as your Ladyship told me. I said you were a celebrated hauthoress, and all the rest of it as your Ladyship desired me; when, would you believe it, one of the ladies'-maids, a himperent pert cretur as ever I seed in my life, begins for to laugh outright; and when I asked her what she laughed at, she said your Ladyship was one of the poorest authoresses in all England. I up and told her, your Ladyship paid your way, like any other lady, when she burst out louder than ever, and said she didn't mean anything about money matters, though she had heard you were very stingy. 'Then what do you mean, Miss?' says I. 'I mean,' says she, 'that your mistress's books is all stuff and nonsense, for when I was in my last place, and she sent her novel as a present to Lady Millenton, her ladyship laughed downright; and when I offered to cut the leaves open, her ladyship told me there was no occasion, for she should never read a line of it. This put my blood up, and I said Lady Millenton was no better than she should be, for being so ungrateful for a present. And then her fellow-servant, who I believe is her sweetheart too, for he reddened up when he saw she was affronted, asked me if I know'd what a hauthoress was? I said to be sure I did. 'Then,' says he, 'a hauthoress is no better than a liar, who invents all sorts of stories, and writes 'em down, and gets money for 'em. Why it's a burning shame, so it is,' says he, 'to get money for lies, when poor sarvants are scolded and discharged if *they* are found telling 'em.'"

"Monsters! ignorant stupid monsters!" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, "not to be able to perceive the difference between

the noble inspirations of genius and the moral turpitude of falsehood."

"Human patience couldn't stand it no longer, your Ladyship, so I gives him my mind. He grew more saucy, and we were coming to blows, when the landlord came and told me your Ladyship wanted me."

"You must treat such ignorant brutes with contempt, Theodore," said his mistress, assuming an air of dignity.

"That's just what I was going to do, your Ladyship. Whenever any man hinsults me, I give him a good hiding, if I can, that's my way of showing my contempt."

"Go now Theodore, and engage the places at the packet-office; but be sure to tell that I am the celebrated Lady Caldersfoot."

"Well, my Lady, I hope no harm will come of it; but, to tell the truth, I'm almost afraid I'll be getting into trouble wherever we go, for I can't bear to see folks laughing, or to hear 'em call your Ladyship a liar."

"Oh! that perfidious Lady Millenton," exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot. "How terrible to find one has been deceived where one had most trusted. Cæsar felt not more despair when he saw that the mortal wound was inflicted by his friend, and exclaimed, 'Et tu, Brute!' than I now do. Well may I say, 'And you, Lady Millenton!'"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE remainder of the evening was spent by Lady Caldersfoot in uttering reflections on the ingratitude, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness of the world, and particularly the female portion of it.

"Oh, Selina!" exclaimed she, "could you but know the trials I have experienced in this way, you would indeed wonder how, with a frame so delicate, and so exquisitely sensitive a mind and heart, I have been able to resist them. This Lady Millenton, whose duplicity has been this evening revealed to me, I believed to be my most devoted friend. How many times has she assured me, that my writings were the solace of her solitary hours, that I was a second De Staël. She has, many a time and oft, addressed notes to me as Co-

rinne, and has even requested me to have my portrait painted as Corinne, at the Capitol. But there is one consolation in all such trials. I know the praise came flowing from the heart, forced from it by excess of honest, fervent admiration. The after detraction is the offspring of base envy, wrung from it by seeing the fame, the celebrity accorded me. Thus, as the bee can extract nothing but honey, even from poisonous flowers, I can extract good from evil. However, such trials enable me to know the human heart, and this is the secret of my power of painting its feelings so admirably well. After the first pangs of disappointment are a little subdued, I reflect that my own superiority has elicited the envy, from whose workings I suffer, and I remember that great genius ever has, and ever will, be pursued by envious detractors. I made the reputation of beauty for Lady Millenton, as well as for many other of my false friends. I took her for my heroine, painted exaggerated pictures of her person, flattered it as well as her mind, and got my publishers to print a key to the characters in the book, by which it became known who were meant. To be sure, this plan was useful in extending the sale; for one of the most successful baits to catch public curiosity, is to let it be supposed that a novel is filled with personalities. Nevertheless one has surely reason to expect that the common-place women, whom an authoress elevates on a pedestal, and gives a sort of celebrity to, ought to be grateful. But, alas! such is the ingratitude of persons, that their sense of obligation is forgotten in the more acute ones of envy and jealousy. Now, I am convinced that the woman, who Theodore told me had spoken so insultingly about my autorship, is a paid agent, sent down here by my enemies, to incite the ignorant to affront me. You look incredulous, Selina, but you know not the persecutions to which persons of great genius are exposed. Yes, I feel now quite certain that the negligence of the civil and military authorities, the rude remarks of the low persons in the street, and the impertinence of the librarians, were the result of the machinations of my enemies, who must have expended great sums to have gained over those people. But this vast expenditure and trouble, taken to prevent my being honoured with a triumph here, or even an ovation, is the most convincing proof of my celebrity, and the envy it creates. I am, like Rousseau, a martyr to the machinations of my

enemies; but my mind being greater, I do not allow them to embitter my life, as they did his."

Selina, who had never before come in contact with one of the *genus irritabile*, began to be seriously alarmed for the sanity of her mistress. Could that poor, misguided woman really believe the gross improbabilities she uttered, or was the whole thing got up to impose on others? was a question she put to herself. But when she reflected on the weakness and vanity of Lady Caldersfoot, revealed by innumerable proofs every hour since she had been with her, she began to think that that lady was a monomaniac, mad only on the one subject, and that one a false estimate of her own talents.

When the bill was brought next morning, Lady Caldersfoot carefully read over the items, and added up the total.

"There is a great mistake in this account," said she, ringing the bell. The waiter answered the summons, and she pointed out to him that dinner had been charged to her *femme de chambre* for the previous evening, although she had not had any. "Tea also is charged, which is likewise an error, as the young person partook of none."

"Both were provided, Madam, and it is the regular custom in this house to charge for what has been provided, even though it may not be eaten."

"I must say I think the custom a very improper one, and also that the charges are very high."

"I assure your Ladyship that we never make different prices, whatever may be the station of our customers."

"But when celebrated persons, authors of distinction, for example, whose presence in an inn must draw attention to it, a reduction should surely be made."

"No author has hitherto claimed any such exemption from the general charges of the house, Madam, and I am sure the proprietor would not consent to make any abatement."

The bill was paid with great reluctance, and the waiter and chambermaid received so small a remuneration, that they were more than half tempted to refuse it, and betrayed by their manner their dissatisfaction. The newspaper, in which was inserted the notice of her departure, written by herself, was sent to the coffee-room, that its occupants should not remain in ignorance of having had so remarkable a lady beneath the same roof with them. Papers were also sent to

the proprietors of both the libraries visited the previous evening, her Ladyship being determined, as she said, to cover them with confusion by this proof of the estimation in which she was held by the London world.

When Lady Caldersfoot and suite, as she loved to term her two attendants, had embarked, she desired to speak to the captain of the packet. He was busily engaged at the time, and told her servant so, but her Ladyship was by no means disposed to wait until he was more at leisure, and kept sending "Theodore," to him, until the latter, unused to the movement and odour peculiar to steam-packets, felt compelled to retire, and was not again visible until the vessel arrived at its destined port. When the captain did present himself before Lady Caldersfoot, she told him that she desired to see him, merely for the purpose of informing him he had on board one of, if not *the* most, distinguished authoress of England.

"Very proud of the honour, Ma'am, I'm sure," was the reply; "which is the lady?"

"I am the lady, Sir; my name is Lady Caldersfoot." She expected that the captain would evince some symptoms of surprise, and more profound respect than previously; but he simply bowed. "I thought it right, Sir, to inform you of the responsibility you have incurred, when you have on board a public character like myself — one on whom so many eyes are turned, for whose safety so many thousands are interested."

"I hope my Lady, I know my duty, and that I should take as much care of my vessel, and passengers, if I had only the humblest on board, as if I had the greatest."

"Nevertheless, Sir, as Cæsar thought fit to tell the boatman when he embarked, 'You carry Cæsar and his fortunes,' I thought it right to declare who I am."

"Very like, my Lady, but the case is somewhat different. Cæsar, as you say, had his fortune aboard with him, and therefore it was quite proper for him to give notice of it to the captain of the packet."

"You mistake, Sir."

"Coming, coming," said the captain, answering to the repeated calls for him from another part of the deck. "I beg pardon, my Lady, I 'm wanted." — "What a rum old un it is," thought he, as he hurried away.

"You will now have an opportunity of observing the effect of mind over body," said Lady Caldersfoot to Selina, who she kept in close attendance near her; "*I* never suffer the slightest inconvenience from the sea. Intellectual people I believe, never do. My secret is to keep my thoughts fixed on some elevated point."

"That accounts for the old lady's looking up at the top of the mast ever since we got out of the harbour," observed a plain old man *sotto voce* to his companion.

"But *à-propos* of elevated subjects," resumed Lady Caldersfoot. "I am reminded that I must give some advice to the captain. Perhaps you, Sir," addressing herself to the plain old man, "will be so obliging at to inform him that Lady Caldersfoot wishes to speak to him."

"I 'm sorry, Ma'am, I can't go to him; but the truth *is*, it is only by keeping in one posture, and not attempting to move, that I avoid sea-sickness. I have been for some time adopting your plan, Ma'am, of fixing my eyes on the top of the mast, but I can't yet tell whether it will succeed or not."

"*My* plan, Sir?" reiterated Lady Caldersfoot, "I really do not comprehend you. I am not aware of having ever communicated any plan to you, or, indeed, of having ever seen you before!"

"Very true, Ma'am; very true; but I happened to overhear you tell the young lady with you, that the best mode to avoid sea-sickness was to keep the thoughts fixed on some elevated point, and so I —"

"Totally mistook my meaning, Sir," and the lady moved away with an air of the utmost dignity. "You see, Selina," observed she, "how every word that falls from the lips of a person of celebrity, and, above all, of literary celebrity, is seized hold of. I cannot utter a word that there is not some eavesdropper listening to note it down, in order to transfer it to his diary or commonplace book. The worst of it is, as in the present instance, people hear the words, but do not comprehend the sense. Only fancy the vulgar person we have just seen, imagining that while my thoughts were ranging through the vast expanse of ether on high, and resuming some of those problems, with regard to the heavens, that have occupied the minds of the greatest philosophers, from the "starry Galileo"

to our own Newton, I was thinking of the mainmast-top. So it is, that narrow and uncultivated minds cannot comprehend great ones. But I forgot. I must see the captain; indeed, it is of vast importance that I should, not only to me, but perhaps to thousands. Go and tell him to come to me."

Selina, much embarrassed to thread her way through the crowd on deck, proceeded in search of the captain, whom she at length found, and requested him to go to Lady Caldersfoot. He seemed in no hurry to attend the summons. Urged, however, by Selina, he came and presented himself before the lady.

"I sent for you, Sir," said she, "to explain a matter that may not only benefit thousands of your future passengers, but be of considerable advantage in securing the cleanliness of your vessel."

"Much obliged, Ma'am," replied the captain, making an awkward attempt at a bow.

"Having turned my thoughts to many grave subjects for benefitting mankind," resumed the lady, "I have ascertained that the occupation of the mental faculties by works of the most spirit-stirring and exciting nature is the only preventative of that most dreadful ailment, sea-sickness."

"Lord love you, Ma'am! it 's of no manner of use. I 've seen people get sea-sick while their minds were intent on reading the state of the funds, and even while under the excitement of strong liquors."

"How shocking!" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot. "But you do not comprehend me. I did not refer to the vulgar excitement you imagine. I meant some high intellectual treat. My works, for example. Buy a complete edition of them, leave the books in the cabin, and I am persuaded those who take them up will be so delighted that they will not suffer from sea-sickness, however rough the sea may be."

An arch smile of incredulity played over the lips of the captain.

"Well, my Lady," observed he, "if your Ladyship will send down a set of the books *gratis*, for I can't afford to buy 'em, we 'll try the effect."

"I never give away my works, except to the most distinguished of the nobility," replied Lady Caldersfoot haughtily. "I believed I was rendering a service to humanity, as well as

to you, Sir, by recommending this plan to your attention. If you reject it, the fault is not mine: I have done my duty in suggesting it," and she turned away from the captain with an air of offended dignity, while he, making a grimace, meant for the edification of the bystanders, applied the thumb of his right hand to his nose, extending the fingers in a direct line in front of it, and walked away, followed by the laughter of those to whom this vulgar gesture was addressed, leaving Lady Caldersfoot wholly unconscious of the cause of the laughter she heard around her.

"I must elevate my thoughts above this sublunary sphere," said she to Selina. "I always do when shocked by the ignorance and stupidity of the vulgar herd of mankind. Behold the clouds drifting away, and revealing the sun, whose bright beams have dispersed them. Here, Selina, here is my note-book, write down every word I utter, for I feel an inspiration, and the passages noted down will come admirably into my next book, — yes" and the speaker assumed the inspired look of a sibyl — "even as the sun disperses the clouds, so will knowledge disperse the mists of ignorance, and enlighten those who now dwell in darkness. Oh! how my heart swells and exults at the thought," — and the lady pressed her hand to her heart, and became dreadfully pale. "Hold me, Selina, hold me," exclaimed she —

"A basin, a basin," cried out the plain old man; but before it could be brought, a most violent paroxysm of sea-sickness had seized Lady Caldersfoot. "It 's no use looking up at the mast, after all, it seems," said the plain old man. "I thought as much. Poor lady, how sick she is, to be sure. Why it 's as much as ever the steward can do to hold her up."

"It 's a pity she hadn't some of her own books to read," observed the captain, winking his eye at those around him, "for they 'd have kept away the sea-sickness." So prostrated were the spirits, and thoughts of Lady Caldersfoot by the violence of her suffering, that when the vessel arrived at Calais she was hardly able to move. She was supported into the room where passengers wait to have their trunks, &c. examined, and there, with a pallid face, crushed bonnet, and dishevelled locks, she sat the picture of despair.

"Tell them, Selina, *who* I am," said she. "Surely when they know, they will respect genius; they will allow my pro-

perty to be removed to the inn — they paid this mark of respect to Sir Walter Scott when he visited France; can they do less towards me?"

"I am afraid, Madam, my representation will not have the desired effect," replied Selina, timidly.

"And why not, pray?" asked the lady angrily. "Am I a less distinguished writer — less entitled to homage?"

Urged by this angry remonstrance, Selina advanced to one of the *douaniers*, and, ashamed and embarrassed by her mission, told him, in pure French, that Lady Caldersfoot was an authoress of distinction.

"*Eh bien, Mademoiselle, tant mieux pour elle; mais qu'est-ce que cela me fait?*"

Selina explained, that she believed it was customary to exempt authors of distinction from paying duty on their clothes, or even from having them examined, and cited Sir Walter Scott.

"*Valtaire Scote*," exclaimed the *Douanier*, "*mais c'était un homme célèbre, c'est autre chose. Mais pourquoi n'aurions-nous dû faire exception de lui-même, malgré tout notre désir de lui faire hommage, si le Gouvernement n'avait pas donné des ordres.*"

Selina returned to Lady Caldersfoot, and related the ill success of her interview with the *Douanier*.

"Owing, I am convinced," exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, "to your not having properly explained my celebrity to him. Were I not too ill, I would have made him sensible of my importance, and of the dishonour to France in not marking its respect and deference to genius and celebrity like mine. Had you told him that I was considered the De Staël of England, the Corinne, he must have felt sensible of the propriety of exempting me from all trouble. His affecting not to know me, for that he does not know my name and fame I never can believe, must be the work of my enemies. "Yes, the wretch has been bribed by them, I am sure."

The *Douanier* now approached, and demanded the keys of the dressing-case and trunks of Lady Caldersfoot, who, too ill and languid to argue with him, though greatly disposed to do so, again appealed to Selina to represent to him once more her claim to exemption from his regular rules. "Tell him," said she, "that when the King of the French hears how ill-treated I have been, which his Majesty shall learn from my

own lips, the persons belonging to the Custom House will be severely reprimanded."

"*Ah bah! nous verrons cela; dépêchez-vous, Madame,*" said the *Douanier*, "*Donnez-moi les clefs?*"

"Do, pray, Madam," whispered Selina.

"*Monsieur,*" replied Lady Caldersfoot, drawing herself up with dignity, "*quand je serai aux Tuileries avec sa majesté le Roi des Français, je lui dirai que vous ne m'avez pas montré le respect qu'on doit à une femme de génie, une auteresse célèbre comme moi.*"

"*Et en quoi, Madame, ai-je manqué le respect envers vous, s'il vous plaît?*"

This dialogue had excited the attention of several of the persons around the interlocutors, and sundry smiles and shrugs of the shoulders were given among them.

"*Dépêchez-vous, Madame, dépêchez-vous, le monde m'attend,*" resumed the *Douanier.*

"*Monsieur, je dirai au Roi comme vous vous êtes mal conduisé à moi, — envers moi qui suis considerée la Staël, la Corinne même, de la Grande Bretagne.*"

"*Mon Dieu! est-il possible, est-il possible?*" exclaimed the man in a tone of the utmost impatience.

"*Oui, Monsieur, je vous repète que je suis la Staël de la grande Bretagne.*"

"*En fin, Madame, voulez-vous, oui ou non, donner les clefs?*"

A circle of persons, evidently much amused, were now collected around Lady Caldersfoot, and Selina felt her shame and embarrassment every moment increase, at being with a person who drew such ridicule on herself, and those belonging to her. "Pray, pray, give him the keys," whispered she. "Indeed, you will suffer in your health from remaining in this place, and being annoyed."

The keys were reluctantly produced, and this very reluctance having led the *Douanier* to believe that the trunks or dressing-box contained something contraband, he minutely examined the contents of both. He drew out of the latter a pot of rouge, which he maliciously held up, so that the persons around him could see it, and, turning the lower end up, to see the name of the maker, exclaimed, "*A la bonne heure, c'est bien Français,*" — he replaced it. He then took

up some pearl powder, and looked at the label, "*Encore Français,*" said he. "*Il parait que la Staël de la grande Bretagne protège beaucoup les marchandises Françaises.*"

This remark, and the display of the articles that occasioned it, drew forth a general laugh.

"*Mais, qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?*" said the *Douanier*, drawing forth one of the *flacons* of the dressing-box, opening it, and applying it to his nostrils. "*Ma foi, c'est du vin, et du vin fort aussi, non pas de la France. C'est donc contrebande, et il sera confisqué.*"

Another laugh followed this last discovery, but Lady Caldersfoot was too much fatigued, though dreadfully angry, to give vent to her indignation.

"How unfortunate," whispered she to Selina, "that I should have put that sherry in my dressing-box at Dover. Did you hear the brutes around us laugh. Well might Burke say, 'The Age of Chivalry was passed.' Had there been one gentleman among the set, he would have stepped forward to protect me from insult. But I will punish that barbarian, I will write a book on the outrages committed on women by the French Custom-house officers, that must speedily produce a total change in the whole system. I am, however, convinced, that my enemies have been at work here, as well as at Dover, to get me into trouble. Be assured, that two, if not more emissaries, came over in the packet with us, paid to occasion me every possible annoyance in their power."

At length the *Douanier* having finished his examination of Lady Caldersfoot's effects, she left the Custom-house, and supported on the arm of Selina, attempted to walk towards the inn, jostled by porters recommending the various hotels to which they belonged, or by men conveying away the luggage of the different passengers.

"Where is Theodore? Do pray, Selina, call that stupid fellow, on whom I have never set my eyes since I entered the ship," said Lady Caldersfoot.

Selina looked on every side, and at last beheld Theodore, pale, and evidently still very unwell, leaning against a wall. She elevated her voice to its utmost extent to call him, Lady Caldersfoot being too weak to sustain herself without the support of her arm. One of the porters, noticing that something was required, offered his services.

"Call that man," said Selina, pointing out the servant.

"His name is Theodore," added Lady Caldersfoot.

"Theodore, Theodore!" cried the porter, with the lungs of a Stentor; but not the least notice did the person so addressed take of the summons.

"Look at the stupid monster," said his mistress. "There he remains as if deaf."

The porter now approached close to the servant, and, slapping him on the shoulder, informed him in French, calling him Theodore, that two ladies required his presence. But the man not understanding a single word of French, and having totally forgotten the new appellation given him by his mistress, refused to move, and the porter, in despair, returned to state that fact.

"Call him by the name of Thomas," said Selina, guessing the truth; and no sooner was this name heard by its owner, than he instantly accompanied the messenger to Lady Caldersfoot, who, ill as she was, could not refrain from bitterly reproaching him for his stupidity. A *fiacre* was now called by the *Commissionnaire*, into which the unfortunate "*de Staël de la grande Bretagne*," as she loved to term herself, was assisted. Theodore being ordered by her to get up behind, and Selina entering the vehicle, they were driven off to the hotel, selected not by Lady Caldersfoot, but by the person most interested in the choice, namely, the *Commissionnaire*, who had marked their forlorn state, and determined to take advantage of it, by conducting them to the worst hotel in Calais, but which happened to be that to which he belonged. Worn down, and dispirited, Lady Caldersfoot, though she perceived the inferiority of the house as soon as she entered it, was unequal to the effort of going in search of a better, and was glad to retire to her bed.

CHAPTER XLV.

Lady Caldersfoot continued so ill that she was not able to commence her journey to Paris for two days, although most desirous to leave the uncomfortable hotel in which she had taken up her abode. The badness of the accommodation could only be equalled by the extravagance of the charges; and her angry expostulations to induce a reduction of them,

proved utterly unavailing, nay, more, exposed her to much incivility.

Theodore was found to be perfectly useless, owing to his entire ignorance of the French language, joined to his natural stupidity, which prevented the possibility of his even guessing the meaning of signs or signals. His mistress too late discovered the mistake she had made, in bringing with her to a foreign country a servant almost incapable of fulfilling his duty in his own; and, with an unreasonableness peculiar to weak and irritable persons, reprimanded him so often, and so severely, as to render him still more stupid. The whole route to Paris was embittered by her recriminations and ill temper.

"How can you be so stupid?" was a frequent question addressed to poor Theodore.

"I 'm sure, my Lady, I don't know. I try all I can not to be so; but it seems, the more I try, the worse it is."

This answer, so full of truth and simplicity, might have disarmed a less unreasonable person than the one to whom it was addressed, but it did not mitigate her wrath, which daily increased, as new and manifold proofs were given of her servant's sins of omission and commission.

"*Mettez le sabot, vîte, mettez le sabot*," would the postilion cry out, when on the point of descending a steep hill, but Theodore remained fixed in the seat behind the carriage; and Selina, compelled to protrude half her person out of the window, and to scream, to the utmost extent of her voice, an explanation of what was required, became hoarse before the end of the first day's journey.

"Why can't you comprehend what is wanted, once that it has been told you?" would Lady Caldersfoot angrily exclaim.

"Oh! your Ladyship, it all comes because I don't understand their lingo. If the postboys would only call out, Put on the drag, I 'd know what they meant in a jiffey, and it would cost them no more trouble, but they are so obstinate that they won't."

Never did the simplicity of Theodore extort a laugh, or even a smile from his mistress, who herself wholly deficient in common sense, or quickness of apprehension, was the last person to make allowance for these defects in others. No inn

on the route was left without a dispute about the charges in the bill, and never, in a single instance, did she carry her point of getting a reduction made in them. *Au contraire*, the innkeepers were more disposed to punish her angry expostulations, by adding some items, alleged to have been omitted by mistake, and in many places she was subjected to an insolence, that led Selina to wonder how she could risk exposing herself to such annoyances.

Worn down, and exhausted, Lady Caldersfoot and suite, as she styled her two attendants, entered Paris, and drove to the Hotel Bristol, where they experienced considerable difficulty in procuring rooms, the terms demanded being considerably more than her Ladyship wished to give, and the proprietor of the hotel not feeling at all disposed to make any abatement in his terms to a person whose appearance and manner were so little engaging. An *appartement au cinquième* was, after much debating, hired, not, however, without her Ladyship assuring the landlord, that she was greatly shocked at the notion of the great and noble visitors, who would be sure to come to see her, being exposed to ascend to such a height.

"Perhaps," said she, "you could lend me a *salon au premier* to receive the junior branches of the royal family, the ministers, ambassadors, and ambassadresses."

This favour was refused. His house, he assured her, was always too well filled to leave a *salon au premier* at his disposal.

And now he was informed — much to the discomfiture of Selina — of who he had the honour of lodging. Lady Caldersfoot left nothing unsaid, to impress her importance on his mind; but her explanations of her literary celebrity, though worded in a style of magniloquence that might have rivalled the puffs on her own books, extracted from an "evening paper," produced not the least effect on him. A good equipage, a dashing courier, and a numerous suite of domestics, were the claims that never failed to meet his attention; and the words, "*vieille folle*," which he uttered *sotto voce* as he retired from her Ladyship's presence, proved how little impressed he was by her self-laudations.

Half dead with fatigue she ascended to the fifth story, an operation that cost her many minutes to perform, and left her panting for breath when it was achieved.

The morning after her arrival, Lady Caldersfoot commanded a *voiture de remise*, and, accompanied by Selina, set out on a shopping expedition.

"*Conduisez-moi à la premier modiste*," said she to the *laquais de place*, appointed to attend her. He gave her instructions to the coachman, who stopped in the Rue de la Paix, at a very small *magazin de modes*, and the *laquais* hastened to open the door of the carriage.

"*Êtes-vous bien sûr que celle ci est la premier magazin de modes à Paris?*" demanded Lady Caldersfoot, impressed with a belief that it could not be, from the smallness of the shop and the meagre display in the window.

"*Certainement non*," replied the *laquais*.

"*Mais pourquoi donc m'avez-vous menez ici, quand je vous a dit que je vouler aller à la première magazin de Paris?*"

"*Pardon, Madame, vous m'avez dit d'aller au premier magazin, non pas à Paris, mais à celui qui était le plus près de l'hôtel.*"

"*Mon Dieu que vous est stupid*," exclaimed the lady, her face flushed with anger.

"*Pas plus stupide qu'un autre*," said the man sulkily; "*est-ce ma faute que vous ne pouvez pas parler Français?*"

"Do instruct the *monstre* where to go, Selina. Explain that I wish to be driven to the most fashionable *modiste* in Paris."

The *laquais* who had heard the word monster, and guessed it had been applied to himself, became outrageous at this insult.

"*Monstre!*" repeated he, "*Vous êtes bien peu comme-il-faut d'oser appeler un homme comme moi monstre; un homme brave qui a servi son pays. Mais vous êtes comme tous vos compatriotes, vous cherchez d'humilier les Français; et ce ne sera jamais dit que Pierre Châtel qui a combattu avec Napoléon, a reçu du pain d'une vieille bête d'Anglaise qui l'appelle monstre! Va! cherchez un autre laquais de place, vieille sorcière, je vous souhaite le bonjour;*" and the *laquais* walked off, leaving the door of the carriage open, and the steps down.

"Was there ever such insolence?" demanded Lady Caldersfoot, almost suffocated with anger. "What are we to do?"

"I will let down the front glass, request the coachman to put up the steps, and close the door; and then I think, Madam, you had better return to the hotel for another *laquais*."

"Oh, no! not on any account. I would not for worlds have the coachman leave the box. The horses would be sure to run away."

At that moment the owner of the *magazin de modes*, who had seen the carriage stop at his door, came out, and in the most bland tone inquired whether the ladies had any commands to honour him with. He assured them he had a charming assortment of articles of the newest fashion and the very best taste.

"We require nothing," replied Lady Caldersfoot, her anger not having yet subsided, and showing itself in her countenance and manner.

"Madame will not find more elegant caps and bonnets in all Paris," urged the shopkeeper.

"All we require is for you to put up the steps, and close the door of the carriage," said Lady Caldersfoot, impatiently.

"*Comment, Madame! Est-ce que vous me prenez pour votre laquais de place? Si vous étiez disposé d'entrer dans mon magazin, je vous aurais assisté de descendre; mais, pour faire le service de votre laquais vous m'excuserez,*" and the man-milliner walked into his shop, and closed the door with a violence that proved his disappointment and indignation.

"Was any thing ever like the conduct of these people?" said Lady Caldersfoot, almost disposed to weep, yet so indignant, that she longed to vent her displeasure on any one within her reach.

And now the passers-by began to pause and stare into the carriage; and the remarkable *toilette* of the elderly lady, so precisely like the caricatures of *les Anglaises pour rire*, exhibited some twenty years before on the *Boulevards*, as well as the evident embarrassment and distress of Selina, attracted their attention. Yet no one evinced any sympathy for their awkward situation, and by degrees the few persons who first stopped to gaze, drew others, until a crowd was literally collected around the carriage.

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, in accents that could leave no doubt of her country, "*comme c'est extraordinaire que dans tous ces personnes que regarde nous il n'a pas une qui voulez nous assist.*"

At that moment a very distinguished looking man, past the meridian of life, but with the air and bearing of a soldier, at-

tracted by the crowd, approached the side of the carriage, close enough to hear the speech, half objurgatory, half reproachful, addressed by Lady Caldersfoot to her youthful companion. He instantly advanced to the open door of the vehicle, and taking off his hat begged leave to offer his services to the ladies, and requested they would explain how he could be useful.

"*Nous vous remercie beaucoup, Monsieur,*" replied Lady Caldersfoot, "*pour votre politesse. La fait est mon laquais de place ma laissé ici avec la porte ouvert et l'escalier descendé comme vous vois, parceque je lui avez reprochez pour son mauvais conduite. Imagine, Monsieur, quel horrible position pour une dame d'être ici en un voiture sans un laquais pour ferme le porte, exposé à l'impertinente curiosité de tous ces personnes qui nous entorons.*"

This speech, uttered in a tone loud enough to be heard by the persons nearest the carriage, as it was meant by the speaker it should be, excited only their merriment, nor did they attempt to conceal their hilarity. The gentleman who had offered his assistance turned around, and, with unaffected dignity, gravely rebuked the laughers, reminding them that such conduct towards women and strangers was not what might be expected from Frenchmen. They, shamed into a sense of their impropriety by his calm reproof, slunk away, and then he again repeated his offer of service.

"*Si vous voulez avoir le bonté de ferme le porte de la voiture, et de direz à mon cocher de me prenez à la hôtel Bristol, Place Vendôme, je veux être bien reconnaissant, Monsieur, et quand vous saurais que je suis Lady Caldersfoot, bien savais par mes travails, je pense que vous ne sera pas fâché d'avoir assisté moi.*"

"*Pour moi, Madame, c'est assez de savoir que vous êtes femme et étrangère pour m'engager de faire tout ce qui pourrait vous être agréable ou utile.*" And putting up the steps with a dignity of manner that proved that even humble occupations may be performed without any loss of grandeur, and which reminded Lady Caldersfoot of a passage in one of her favourite poets, whom she was fond of quoting, that even dung may be tossed with grace and dignity, he closed the door, took of his hat, bowed lowly to her Ladyship, directed the coachman to drive to the Hotel Bristol, and disappeared.

"Oh! what a man, Selina! What dignity! what high

breeding! That is indeed a *preux chevalier*. How I regret not having asked his name. Did you observe how the brutes, who stood gazing and laughing at us, fell back when he reproved them. He must be a person of high rank and distinction. A thought strikes me. Yes, it must be so. Depend on it he is the King. Only fancy what an adventure! I am now delighted that my *laquais de place* left us, as it has led to this delightful *rencontre*. What an incident to have to relate: and then only imagine what *his* surprise will be when I am presented at the Tuileries, and that he discovers my celebrity! Oh! it's quite delightful!"

Lady Caldersfoot was so pleased by what she called this charming adventure, that she quite forgot the disagreeable event that led to it, ere she returned to the hotel. Arrived there, however, she sent for the proprietor, and made a serious complaint against the *laquais*, to which, as is usual in such cases, she was answered, that of all the *laquais* in attendance at his house, Pierre Châtel was considered the most civil and obliging. He begged her Ladyship's pardon for venturing to assure her that she would not find, in all Paris, a servant who would submit to be accused of stupidity, or called a monster, as Pierre Châtel had complained had occurred to him.

"Then," said the lady, "I will take out my own servant: *he* will not presume to resent any of those little ebullitions of temper peculiar to persons of genius. Monsieur is not, perhaps, aware that I am one of the most celebrated writers in Europe!"

"Yes; Madame did me the honour of confiding that fact to me last evening, on her arrival."

"Ah! true; I had forgotten it. Be so obliging as to send my servant, Theodore. But stay a moment. Do inform me if the King is not a tall, handsome, and noble-looking man?"

"Certainly, Madame, his Majesty is all that. He is to be sure no longer *dans sa première jeunesse*, *mais* he is, nevertheless, *un bel homme*."

"You see I was right, Selina; yes, perfectly right. I always am. *I* never make a mistake, and am consequently more impatient when I observe the stupidity of others. Yes, I knew it was the King."

Theodore now made his appearance, and with a most

rueful countenance, of which, however, his mistress took no notice.

"You are to go out with the carriage, Theodore," said she. "I know you are going to remind me that you do not speak a word of French, but that does not signify. All you will be required to do is, to hand to the coachman my written instructions of where he is to drive to, and to open the carriage-door and let down the steps, just as you do at home."

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon, but I'm so very hill, I can scarce stand upright. The sea-sickness almost killed me; and ever since I have not got a morsel of wholesome victuals, so I'm nearly starved, and so weak, I don't know what to do. I can't ask for nothing, owing to not knowing their lingo, and they keep offering me such outlandish things as I never seed in all my born days, and can't abide the sight of."

"The air and exercise will do you good, and render you less fastidious about your food, so get your hat and be ready, for I shall go out in a few minutes. And now, Selina, I think I hat better write the announcement of my arrival, without any loss of time."

Lady Caldersfoot ascended to her *appartement au cinquième*, and seated herself at a table, where, having devoted a considerable time to the task, she produced, and with an air of great selfsatisfaction, the following article which she read aloud to Selina: —

"*Nous suis heureux de l'avoir dans notre pouvoir à annoncez à nos lecteurs que la plus célébre auteuresse de la grande Bretagne etes arrivez dans notre capital. — Lady Caldersfoot est, comme sera devinez toute suite, la dame en question, et le réputation que ses travails, si plein d'information, génie, interêt et esprit, a aquis pour elle, veux nous ne doute pas, procurer pour elle un reception plus brilliant que cela de aucun étrangère qui a jamais entrez Paris. — Sa seigneurie a l'intention à restez seulement un court temps avec nous, etant appellez par les autres nations de Europe, à visitez leurs capitals, comme ils sont pressez de payez leurs hommage au de Staël d'Angleterre.*"

"I think that will do," observed she.

"Pardon me, Madam, but there are a few grammatical errors and faults in the idiom," said Selina.

"Errors!" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, "what can you

possibly be thinking of? I who write French with as great a facility and purity as I do English, to be accused of grammatical errors and faults in the idiom, and by my *femme de chambre*, too! I really wonder at your taking so great a liberty, and I desire you never presume to do so again," and she turned angrily away, evidently deeply offended with Selina.

"We will leave this at Galignani's that he may not only have it inserted in his paper, but also in several others," said Lady Caldersfoot. When arrived at Galignani's, her Ladyship entered his shop, and announced the purpose of her visit.

"Your Ladyship's arrival will be regularly noticed in our paper," replied a clerk who spoke English perfectly well, "but if anything more than a simple mention of the name, arrival, and at what hotel is required, it must be paid for as an advertisement."

"Inform me then how much it will cost?

The clerk ran his eyes over the paper, and a smile he could not conceal, betrayed his sense of its absurdity, and the errors with which it abounded.

"I wish you to have it inserted in three or four of the French newspapers," said Lady Caldersfoot, "and desire that no change, not even that of a single word, may be made in it."

"As you please, Madam," replied the clerk; who, having counted over the number of lines, stated the expense of the advertisements in the different papers, amounting to a larger sum than her Ladyship had calculated on, but which she however paid, remarking how much better such affairs were managed in London, where the proprietors of papers were too happy to receive fashionable news, to make any charge for its insertion. The advertisement, read aloud by the clerk, as soon as its writer had left the shop, produced peals of laughter among the other clerks and *habitués*.

From Galignani's Lady Caldersfoot proceeded to Madame Baréne, the most celebrated Parisian *modiste*, where hats, caps, bonnets, turbans, and *coiffures* of every description were displayed for her inspection. She selected the most youthful, and of the brightest colours, resisting the suggestions of Madame Baréne who, anxious for the credit of her establishment, wished her customers to wear only head-dresses suited to their ages and countenances. As several of these, the least appropriate, were tried on, *les demoiselles* of the

magazin, and, indeed, the polite Madame Baréne herself, could hardly conceal their inclination to laugh at the airs and pretensions of the very plain elderly lady, whose vanity was so openly exhibited as to lead them to suppose she was half crazed.

"*Je trouve que cette turban de crêpe de rose pâle me vais remarquablement. Le rose tendre est mon colour favorite*," observed she, assuming a languishing air, as she admired herself in the large mirror.

Madame Baréne said she was sorry she could not let her ladyship have that turban, as it was made for the young bride, la Duchesse de Miraflores, and must be sent home immediately.

"*Faisez moi un precisement comme lui*," said Lady Caldersfoot "*et je vous prie, laisse moi avoir le demain. Il faut aussi que vous fournissez moi avec un garlande de lauriers.*"

"To be worn on a cap, I suppose, Madame?" inquired the *modiste*.

"*Pas de tout, pas de tout, il est pour porter dans mon cheveux.*"

The utter astonishment of Madame Baréne and *les demoiselles* is not to be described, at the notion of an extremely ill-looking old woman, appearing in her hair or rather in a wig, and wearing a wreath.

"*Je suis une auteuresse célébre, enfin le plus célébre de Grande Bretagne, et il est pour cela que je souhaite de porter la guirlande qui est approprié aux grands auteurs.*"

"*Ah! c'est different, Madame*," replied the *modiste*. "*Et de quelle forme Miladi désire-t-elle que la guirlande soit faite?*"

"*Comme celui représenté dans la tableau de Corinne à la Capitol*," answered Lady Caldersfoot, perfectly unconscious of the ridicule to which she was exposing herself.

Having, as she now considered, made all the purchases necessary for entering society *en grande toilette*, Lady Caldersfoot descended to her carriage — but found that her footman had deserted his post. The porter explained that the servant had been taken so dangerously ill, that he had been obliged to be removed into his lodge, where he still remained in great pain.

"How provoking," exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, "that he should chose this time above all others to fall ill!"

"*Qu'est-ce que Madame désire soit fait pour le pauvre homme?*" inquired the porter.

"*Envoyez-lui à l'Hospital la plus près,*" replied she with the utmost indifference, "*et laissez-moi savoir l'addresse de la Hospital où il êtes placé. Je loge à l'Hôtel Bristol.*"

"*Mais, Madame, ce serait mieux que vous vous chargiez de votre domestique. Pauvre homme, il est étranger, et nous ne pouvons rien faire pour lui.*"

"*Envoyez-lui à l'Hospital, et je veux payé pour qu'on auriez soin de lui,*" said the unfeeling old woman; and, motioning to the porter to open the carriage-door, she stepped in followed by Selina, who, shocked and disgusted by her gross selfishness and insensibility, determined, when she entered the hotel, to see its respectable mistress, give her some money to ensure good treatment for poor simple Thomas and to have him removed. The gentle manner, good countenance, and above all, the pure French of Selina, won the good-will of the hostess, who pledged herself to send off a *fiacre* with one of the waiters to remove the poor man, and to have a physician called in to see him. She did not let the hostess know that either the money or kindness originated solely with herself; and so liberal was the donation she placed in her hand, that the kind-hearted Frenchwoman, believing it was sent by Lady Caldersfoot, remarked to her husband when Selina had withdrawn, that "*cette vieille folle Anglaise avait un bon cœur après tout.*"

"*Imaginez-vous, ma chère,*" observed he, "*qu'elle vient de me chercher pour m'expliquer qu'elle est prête de donner de ses autographes à toutes les personnes qui désirent d'en avoir; quelle idée, n'est-ce-pas?*"

"*Elle est Anglaise, mon cher, c'est assez dire,*" was the reply of the hostess, who was firmly convinced that everything strange and eccentric in Lady Caldersfoot might be attributed to her being English — a belief from which many of her compatriots, with higher pretensions to education and knowledge of the world, are not exempt.

The following day the announcement of Lady Caldersfoot's arrival appeared in Galignani's journal, as also in three or four French papers, all which were forwarded to her Ladyship. But what was her dismay, when she observed that, in

each journal, the notice was headed by the word *annonce*, proving that the paragraphs were paid for.

"How stupid!" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot. "This spoils all, for every one will now see that the notice has been paid for, which will destroy the intended effect, and give rise to spiteful remarks among my enemies. Ah! why should fame be ever followed by envy? and why should my compatriots, instead of being proud of their countrywoman, pursue me with such jealousy?"

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE following day Lady Caldersfoot sent her cards to the English ambassadress, and to the few acquaintances she possessed at Paris. She hesitated for some time about favouring, in the same manner, the Parisian ladies of distinction, whose names alone were known to her.

"I am," observed she to Selina, "a public character, and confer honour by making the first advances towards acquaintanceship with these ladies."

"Might it not be better to postpone such advances until your Ladyship has been presented at the Tuileries by the ambassadress?"

"Perhaps so, for then they will be more impressed with a due sense of the honour. Doubtless they are familiar with my works, and long to know the writer; but it is not alone as an authoress that I wish to be recognized. I desire to be known as a woman of fashion, whose opinions on society have great weight and are of vast importance."

In a few hours after this self-laudation, and while Selina was employed in adding some fantastic decorations to the court-dress of her mistress, the proprietor of the hotel made his appearance, and, with a *triste* countenance, announced that he was the bearer of painful intelligence.

"Good Heavens! what is it?" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot. "Has the King been shot at, and killed, or wounded? That would be too dreadful to me, who am dying with impatience to see his Majesty at the Tuileries, and to thank one of the greatest *monarchs* of Europe, for the service rendered to me in the street yesterday by the first *gentleman*. But you do not speak; you do not tell me if my prophetic soul has

rightly divined the fatal calamity you have come to disclose!" said her Ladyship, forgetting that she had not allowed her host time to speak.

"God be thanked, Madam," replied he, "the King is safe! The sad news I came to communicate relates only to your poor servant, who expired in the hospital after a most violent spasmodic attack, pronounced to be cholera."

"Oh! you have quite relieved me. I was terrified for the King, and was thinking that an ode from my pen would be expected, on such an event, by the whole of the royal family; in fact, by all France, if not by Europe."

"Long may it be, Madam, before the pen of any poet be called on to write on such a subject, though, when the sovereign shall be removed from earth, doubtless every poet in France — and we boast many — will pour forth an elegiac strain, rendering it less necessary for foreign bards to commemorate it. But, to resume the *triste* subject which has brought me into your Ladyship's presence, I beg to know whether you have any instructions to give relative to the interment of your late poor servant?"

"None whatever. He will, of course, be buried wherever those who die in the hospital are deposited, unless the students employ the body for anatomical purposes."

"Oh, Madam!" exclaimed the host, turning away with an involuntary gesture of horror. "Surely you will authorize me to see that your poor servant be decently interred."

"I must decline interfering in the business and for two reasons. The first is, that I am a philosopher, and hold it to be wrong to attach the least importance to where the dead are laid. The second is, that as, in all probability, the medical students will take advantage of Theodore's remains for analysing all the internal appearances symptomatic of the malady which is supposed to have caused his sudden death, I do not think it right that I should be charged with any further expense. If, as I expect, an autopsy takes place, will you be so obliging as to state to any of the surgeons who may be employed on the occasion, that a person well-skilled in scientific researches, is desirous to know, if the extraordinary stupidity so observable in the deceased when in life, can be at all explained by any remarkable idiosyncrasy in the development of the brain. I am given to trace effect to cause, and should like

to ascertain this point. Indeed, so disposed am I to throw a light on science, that I have left instructions in my will to have my own head opened, in order that the examination of my brain may assist in accounting for how far an unusual development of that organ may confirm the hypothesis, that the genius of great writers and thinkers originates in the large mass of brains. I see you are surprised at the excess of my scientific erudition, no less than of my philosophic self-control and calmness, on subjects that shake the nerves of most of my sex."

"It is true, Madame, I was not prepared to find Madame *si philosophe*. The money that Miladi sent to my wife last evening, by Mademoiselle, to be appropriated for the use of the poor man, who did not live to profit by it, is still in my hands, with the exception of a few *francs*, paid to the persons who conveyed him to the hospital; I thought, therefore, that as it will be amply sufficient to offer a gratuity to the hospital, and to pay for the interment, Madame would not object to its being expended in that way."

"As you please, Sir; for, although I do not attach the slightest importance to such matters, I have no objection to yield to the prejudices of others; so you may employ the money in your hands for the purposes you mention, with only one proviso, namely, that I am not to be called on for any further sum."

"Madame may be perfectly easy on that point, for the money I hold is quite enough."

"*Quelle drôle de femme! quelle drôle de femme!*" murmured the proprietor of the hotel, as he descended the stairs; "*je commence à croire que l'instruction est une mauvaise chose pour les esprits faibles.*"

"So my *femme de chambre* is not only rich but generous," said Lady Caldersfoot to herself, when left to her meditations. "To give a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of the funeral, and make a *cadeau* to the hospital proves this. I longed to find out the precise sum, but any question to my host would have proved that it did not come from me, whereas now I shall have the credit of it. How strange that Selina should have the power to give so much money! There is something mysterious in all this, something that might be turned to account for a novel; I must wind myself into her

confidence, get her to write down the incidents of her life, and convert it into a book, that, with my name, may be a profitable speculation for me. That reminds me that I must get her to note down for me all that she knows of the Duchess of Glenallen. Her adventures might be worked up into something saleable."

Selina had descended to the room of the mistress of the hotel to inquire about poor Thomas, or Theodore as his lady insisted he should be called, and was there when the proprietor descended from his interview with Lady Caldersfoot. Her grave face and moistened eye revealed that she had heard of the death of the poor man.

"Poor fellow! in a strange land, with no one that he knew, or that could understand his language, read the prayers for the dying to him, or close his eyes," said she; "oh! yes, it is sad to die away from one's own country."

"Be assured, Mademoiselle, he was treated kindly. Poor fellow, he fell into delirium almost immediately after he was brought into the hospital, and died unconscious of where he was," said the hostess, a good and kind-hearted woman.

"Miladi, to whom I have communicated her late servant's death, has allowed me to appropriate the money you deposited in my hands yesterday, Mademoiselle, for the funeral expenses, and a small gift to the hospital. At first, Miladi was not disposed to interfere; but when I told her that the money she had sent me by you, Mademoiselle, was sufficient, she permitted me to use it."

Selina blushed deeply at this new proof of the disingenuousness of her mistress, but made no comment on it, being determined not to reveal to the proprietor of the hotel, or his wife, that the money had been her own. She shuddered at the thought, that, should *she* be taken ill, her heartless and selfish mistress would not hesitate to send her off to an hospital, and determined that the first opportunity that should offer, she would avail herself of it, to seek a home with some mistress on whose humanity and kindnes he might count.

When summoned to Lady Caldersfoot's presence, she found that lady had been busily employed in writing. Various sheets of paper, marked by erasures at every line proving her industry, if not her facility at composition, were

before her and her pocket-handkerchief was applied to her eyes, which bore the traces of tears.

"Ah! Selina. You have not heard of the death of poor Theodore! I have been writing a little article on the melancholy event, and I have made such a touching picture of it that it has greatly moved me. When the landlord came, and communicated the decease of the poor fellow to me, in his plain unvarnished manner, it had no effect whatever on my feelings. Events, however sad in themselves, never have, unless represented in a pathetic style; but when I colour and dress them in my own way, you cannot imagine how they touch me. I really have been shedding tears at what I have been writing. This article will immortalize poor Theodore's memory, and reflect eternal honour on mine, not only as a writer, but as a woman possessing that sensibility and tenderness appertaining solely to great genius. I must read you this article; after which I will send it to Galignani's for insertion in several French journals.

The astonishment of Selina at this new insight into the character of Lady Caldersfoot, is not to be described. That imagination, excited into action by a craving for notoriety, should awaken a spurious sensibility that a simple statement of facts could not arouse, seemed to her unsophisticated mind little short of miraculous; and that her mistress should avow it so unconcernedly, appeared to her scarcely less surprising. Hitherto she had been a stranger to the extraordinary influence exercised over weak intellects by an inordinate thirst for celebrity, without the possession of the abilities necessary to achieve this imaginary good. But that an ill-regulated mind, destitute of one ray of genius, should work itself up to a false sentiment by a key, as clocks are wound up to perform certain movements, she had never hitherto had any opportunity of knowing. Consequently, she was at a loss to account for the moral phenomenon. That Lady Caldersfoot was self-deceived, she could not doubt. The traces of recent tears in her eyes, the flush on her cheeks, and the excitement she manifested at an event which the proprietor of the hotel had declared a short time before had failed to occasion her the least regret, bore evidence to this fact, and Selina considered it as a new page opened to her in the book of life, which, while it furnished her with ample food for reflection,

did not serve to exalt her opinion of the heads or hearts of those pretenders to literature, who seek distinction without the means of acquiring it.

Lady Caldersfoot cleared her voice, and commenced the following article: —

"*Le morte inattendu d'un domestique Anglaise derniermente arrivé à Paris, dans elle même un évènement très peu interessante pour la publique, devient une sujet que engagerez le interêt de tout l'Europe quand on saurais qu'il était le laquais de la célébrée Miladi Caldersfoot l'arrivée de laquelle nous vient d'annoncée dans notre dernière nombre. Cet malheureux homme devouée à son noble maîtresse la suivez de l'Angleterre, malgré ses conseilles souvent reiterée que le faiblesse de son santé lui rendez trés peu capable pour voyagez. Fierre de la gloire de son belle et distinguer lady, et soyant si continuellment habituer de voir les homages offert à elle dans le trois Royaumes Britannique il ne pouvais pas se privez de la bonheur d'être le témoin de sa triumphe à Paris où la génie est aussi bien compris, et si délicatement fêté. Cet pauvre homme a payez avec son vie, son dévotion pour cette dame célébre, mais il ne regrettez pas son morte excepter d'avoir succumber avans d'avoir vue son noble maîtresse recevais cette homage que France est toujours fière d'offrir au grande génie.*

Théodore (le malheureux se nomme comme cela) la jour après son arrivée à Paris, voyons Miladi Caldersfoot sortez dans son voiture suivez par un laquais de place, il s'étouffe de chagrin et de jalousie qu'un autre que lui avait cette honor, et soubitement tombez malade. Miladi, avec ce profound sensibilité qu' n'apertain que au femmes de grand génie, a deviner ses souffrances morales, et frapper par l'idée qu' il peut étré rongér par la chagrin, a retournez à la Hôtel pour lui consolez. Mais la coup etoit donnez! Il a exigé pour dernier consolation que son noble maîtresse lui lassera montez derrière son voiture, et arrivée chez la premier modiste de Paris, il est tombé en syncope, et malgré toute ses attentats et celles de toute les médicins que la noble lady chercher il est morte en peu d'heures après, bénissant la nomme de son bienfaitrice, son cher noble et célébrée Miladi Caldersfoot.

Le douleur qui éprouve cet éminent autoress, l'empêche de recevais le visites de les Princes, les noblesse, et les hommes la plus marquent dans le politique, comme dans la literature qui assiège son porte depuis la matin jusque à la soir. Mais nous

espere que dans quelque jours elle paroitra à la Cour ou le famille Royal est impatient de la voir."

Lady Caldersfoot wiped her eyes as she finished this article, during the perusal of which the feelings of Selina struggled between disgust and astonishment. Such a tissue of falsehood she had not been prepared for, and she felt angry with herself for feeling disposed to laugh at it.

"But I am afraid," said Lady Caldersfoot, running her finger over the lines to count them, that the insertion of this article will cost me a great deal of money. How provoking that one has to pay for such things in France! Nevertheless, I must have it in the papers; it can't be helped."

The article was despatched, copies of the paper that was to contain it were commanded, and instructions were given that all visitors should be told that her Ladyship was still in such grief that she could receive no one; but that if autographs were asked for, she was ready to bestow them, or to sit for her portrait to any artists of acknowledged merit that might solicit that favour.

"I should be glad," said she to Selina, looking at herself in the mirror, "that my portrait was taken just now, for the shade of melancholy diffused over my countenance would lend additional interest to the picture, more especially as the date of it will correspond with the death of poor Theodore, an event which, proving my deep sensibility, and the devotion always excited in the breasts of those permitted to approach me, will be gratifying to posterity."

There were moments when Selina really doubted the sanity of Lady Caldersfoot, and yet in no way was the folly of that lady evinced, except by a vanity so surpassing belief, to all save those who witnessed its craving for admiration, and the incessant efforts made to win it, that she was compelled to admit that a monomaniac, if not quite mad, approached very near the confines of insanity, exposing herself to ridicule, while madness inspired only pity. Lady Caldersfoot thought, spoke, dreamt only of self. The rest of the world was looked on only as in relation to any advantage she could derive from it. Those who flattered her she liked, or fancied she liked, for the moment; but for those who did not administer to her self-love she entertained a positive dislike, and attributed their coldness or reserve to envy and jealousy of her celebrity.

So insatiable was her vanity, that no food was too coarse to gratify its voracity. Those, and they were many, who, for sake of laughing at her, would utter the most fulsome flatteries, she considered as her only friends, being wholly blind to their insincerity, and to the ridicule their adulation drew on her.

The following day, the papers containing the absurd article written by Lady Caldersfoot were sent to her, and again the word "*annonce*" prefixed to it, proved that it was nothing else than a paid advertisement.

"How enraging!" exclaimed she. "How abominably stupid these French newspaper persons must be. I wonder the literary people here don't manage to bring them to reason. They are more docile with us in England. Who ever saw the publishers' puffs, quoted from 'evening papers,' the names of which, however, are never put down, for the good reason, that no such notices were ever given, inserted as advertisements in London? No; here one of the great means of extending the fame of authors, whom critics are too envious of to render justice to, is unknown! I have been thinking, Selina," resumed Lady Caldersfoot, "that as you have little to occupy your time here, you might keep notes of my conversation with you, as well as of the different events that occur during my stay, and which I shall not have time to jot down."

"I am afraid, Madam, that I have no talent to enable me to perform such a task satisfactorily."

"I do not, of course, expect you to write as I do. All I require is a plain statement, which I can afterwards colour, as only great writers can. I am sure, that if notes were kept of my conversation, even with my *femme-de-chambre*, just touched up by me, a publisher in London would pay *me* handsomely for the volume; and I would make you a present for your trouble. Not that it would be a trouble, far from it; it would really become a labour of love, for I say such original, such piquant, such witty things, that you could not fail to be delighted when you read them. But you do not seize the idea as I expected. I am afraid, that although your own language is correct, and that you speak French and Italian tolerably, your intellect is of a mean order. I have noticed that you do not appear to appreciate the brilliant things I say and write. For example, — yesterday, when I read you the notice of the

death of poor Theodore, which drew tears from me, and will, I venture to predict, from thousands, instead of showing either the sensibility or enthusiastic admiration I anticipated, you remained unmoved."

"You are right, Madam, my intellect is of a very mean order. I am a very poor judge of literature, and incapable of appreciating brilliant conversation," replied Selina, anxious to escape the odious task of noting down the inane and egotistical sayings of her foolish mistress.

"Do not despair of becoming other than you at present are," said Lady Caldersfoot. "A woman, with an intellect like mine, cannot fail to produce an effect on yours. At present you are surprised, overpowered by my genius, but in time you will become capable of comprehending it."

The next day a visiting card, with an invitation to a *soirée* from the English Ambassadress, put Lady Caldersfoot on the *qui vive*.

"I must make a striking effect on this occasion," observed she to Selina, "for it will be the opening of my Parisian campaign. Lady Granville, that best-bred of all ambassadresses, will, doubtless, assemble all the *élite* of French society to do homage to me, and I should like to render honour to her *salons* by my appearance. All eyes will, of course, be fixed on me; my dress will be noted and copied, so you must exert all your taste and skill in my *toilette* that evening. I must also not be idle. I must prepare replies to the elegant compliments that will, doubtless, be addressed to me on that occasion. Every word I utter will be sure to be commented on, and noted down; and I must maintain the honour of an English *bel esprit*, by a constant fire of *bon mots*, and lively sallies. You must take care that I drink some strong coffee before I go. It clears the intellect and excites the fancy."

It became evident to Selina, after some days, that her mistress's expectations of the sensation her presence was to excite at Paris, had not been realized. Disappointed vanity began to reveal itself in her temper, which, depending solely on adulation, the want of that stimulant rendered her irascible and capricious. The few cards, left at her door, and the constant answer to her daily inquiries, whether autographs had been requested, or if painters had solicited permission to paint her portrait, that no such requests or solicitations had

been made, enraged her. Paris, she assured Selina, was no longer what it had been. Genius no more received due homage there, or else her enemies in England had concocted some scheme to frustrate her hopes of popularity in the French capital.

On the evening of the assembly at the English Embassy, Lady Caldersfoot commenced her *toilette* at least three hours before she could present herself there. Caps were tried on, turbans and *chapeaux*, in turn, replaced them; and at length her Ladyship decided, that as the present was to be her first appearance in public, she would, as a mark of appropriate distinction, wear the wreath of bays, commanded at Madame de Baréne, on the leaves of which, Selina was to sew the few loose brilliants her mistress possessed.

"How slow you are! will you never have done?" repeated the impatient lady, while her *femme de chambre* attached the diamonds as rapidly as she could. A green velvet gown of obsolete fashion, and a scarlet India scarf embroidered in gold, with the wreath of bays, fastened behind by a bow of ribbon the colour of her scarf, and which fell down on her neck, as the fastening of the wreaths represented on the busts of Cæsar, completed the fantastic costume of Lady Caldersfoot. A quantity of rouge, put on the cheek-bones, as well as the rest of the cheeks, gave a peculiarly fierce look to her eyes, and her whole appearance was so *outré*, that Selina felt assured she would become an object of general observation at the embassy, for which she departed perfectly satisfied with her own appearance, and anticipating a triumphant *succès*.

When her Ladyship returned at a late hour, she was in high spirits.

"Never," exclaimed she "was there a more brilliant or successful *début* in the *beau monde*, than I have made this evening. No one else was looked at — no one else cared for except me; I was quite the attraction of the evening; and much of my brilliant reception was owing to two of the *attachés* at the embassy, who told every one who I was, not forgetting to explain that I am the first authoress in England. I must say those young men were justly proud of me, for they did nothing but present persons of distinction to me, and compliment me on my works. They even repeated passages out of my 'Delicate Dilemma' and 'Elegant Errors.' I was

really almost overpowered by their attention, and well-turned compliments. The Prince de Joinville was there, and was very civil to me. I overheard him tell a lady, that he should like of all things to have a likeness of me for the figure-head of his ship, — was not that flattering? It made the lady, and a very pretty person she is, so angry, that she affected to laugh in a scornful manner, but I knew it was her envy. Indeed, I must own that all the women seemed jealous of the sensation I excited, and the universal attention I received. Lady Granville, who is all amiability, was fearful I might be distressed by the sort of *furore* with which I was followed, and several times tried to check the *attachés* in their somewhat too marked attentions to me; but, dear, fine, young men, they were so enthusiastic in their admiration of their countrywoman, and so anxious to make the Frenchmen partake it, that they could not be repressed. I told the Duke de Joinville, that although I had not yet had the honour of being presented at the Tuileries, I had the honour, and pleasure too, of seeing and speaking to the King. He looked surprised, asked where, and I told him. He quite enjoyed it. It is a great pleasure, and will, I am sure, be a great advantage to me to have made two such friends as the two *attachés*. They will, I foresee, spare me a good deal of expense in *annonces* — as the newspaper people here call advertisements — for they will tell every one of my celebrity. I remember perfectly having seen these two charming young men in society in London. They told me they were longing to have the honour of being presented to me then, but that they dared not request that favour, seeing me always surrounded by a crowd, offering homage to me, but that here, where my *renommée* had not yet become known, they ventured to enjoy my society before the Parisian world, as would be sure to be the case, engrossed me. They will, as they said, become my *proneurs* and bring themselves into fashion by acting as my *aide-de-camps*."

Such was the state of excitement into which Lady Caldersfoot was thrown, that the doubts of her sanity, often before awakened in the mind of Selina, became renewed. Never previously could she have imagined that gratified vanity could have produced such an intoxication of the spirits as she now witnessed. It was evident to her, that the *attachés* at the embassy had been, what, in vulgar parlance, is called hoaxing

Lady Caldersfoot, that the amiable Lady Granville had endeavoured to check their *mauvaises plaisanteries*, and that her vain and foolish mistress had furnished the subject of general hilarity to those to whom her mischievous and laughter-loving young countrymen had revealed her foibles, they exciting them into increased action by the gross flatteries they had addressed to her, without her suspecting for a moment that she was otherwise than an object of general attention and respect.

CHAPTER XLVII.

It had been agreed that the English Ambassadress was to present Lady Caldersfoot at the next reception at the Tuileries, which was to take place in two days, and, previous to that event, her Excellency wished to see that lady.

When she returned from the embassy, an expression of great dissatisfaction was visible in her countenance. "I am quite annoyed, Selina," observed her Ladyship, "for the Ambassadress has been giving me some advice about my dress, which, though I am sure it was kindly meant, places me in a disagreeable dilemma. If I adopt it, the dress I have ready for the occasion cannot be worn; and if I do not, it will appear as if I disregarded the opinion of the Ambassadress, to whom I wish to pay every mark of respect. Her Excellency told me that dress was a matter of grave import at Paris; that the peculiar taste of the individual was never consulted, but that all ladies adopted the prevailing fashion, with a due reference to the age of the wearers. For example, that women once passed their early youth, never wore pale pink in France, or even pale blue, that grave and sober colours were alone worn by women over thirty; and recommended me to pay attention to these points. Can anything be more absurd? If I did not know that the Ambassadress is the most amiable person in the world, and quite superior to entertaining any feelings of envy or jealousy, I should be disposed to think that this advice might be dictated by a motive of preventing my making as distinguished an appearance as if I followed my own taste. I suppose the truth is, that, being extremely popular at Paris, her Ladyship is fearful of creating angry feelings in the breasts of the French ladies, by my eclipsing

them at Court, and so wishes to diminish the effect of my appearance by suggesting my adoption of the general mode, which renders all women alike, whereas my own taste in dress always makes me appear *unique*, and at one glance points me out as a remarkable person. The young *attachés*, the other night, advised me earnestly *not* to change my style of dress. They said it was perfection; and men I have always considered better judges of dress than women. At least, in men there can be but one motive for praising; *they* speak from the heart. I must, I fear, abandon my lovely court-dress, which produced such an effect at the last drawing-room of our Queen. Prince Albert appeared extremely struck with it. Pink and silver has always been considered peculiarly becoming to me. How vexatious not to be able to wear it here!"

A new court-dress had to be made; and Lady Caldersfoot, having adhered to the kind counsel of the English Ambassadress, made a much more respectable appearance than she had ever previously presented. Nevertheless the profuse use of *rouge*, and the juvenility of her *coiffure*, deteriorated considerably from the effect of the handsome court-dress, and brought a blush to the cheeks of the amiable lady who was to present her, and who, truly patriotic in her feelings, wished the English to appear to the best advantage at Court.

When dressed, and waiting for her carriage to proceed to the Tuileries, Lady Caldersfoot received a pile of French newspapers — more remarkable for their drollery and piquancy, than for the propriety or good taste of their contents.

"Open them, Selina. Make haste and glance over the columns. I am sure, by their being sent to me, that they must contain something that will give me pleasure, and exhilarate my spirits for my presentation at Court. I dare not open them myself, lest they might soil my dress."

The colour rose to the face of Selina as her eye glanced over the pages, and caught a tissue of the most poignant ridicule, and sarcastic comments levelled at her mistress, in consequence of the articles published by that lady in Galignani, and the French papers.

"Why don't you read the paper aloud?" demanded Lady

Caldersfoot. "You know I am in momentary expectation of the carriage being announced."

"The article in this journal," said Selina, laying down the *Figaro*, "is not of a nature to give pleasure; it is extremely impertinent."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lady Caldersfoot, looking very angry; "my enemies, my enemies again at work! Look over the others; they cannot surely be *all* offensive."

Selina glanced over each of the papers, but, finding all of the same character, told her mistress that they were beneath her notice.

"Read me the least offensive, that I may judge whence it proceeds," said Lady Caldersfoot.

"If your Ladyship will excuse me, I shall feel obliged," replied Selina, really unwilling to inflict the pain she felt such attacks must give her foolish mistress.

"You will put me out of all patience," observed that lady, "read, and at once, as I have already twice told you."

Selina, pitying the mortification which the article she was so peremptorily commanded to read aloud, must give to one so vain, commenced perusing the following article, not daring to turn her eyes for a moment on Lady Caldersfoot: —

"*La bizarrerie des Anglais était, et sera toujours un sujet inépuisable de ridicule; mais il était réservé à une vieille folle qui se nomme Miladi Caldersfoot,* (eh quel nom!) d'y mettre le comble. Nos lecteurs ne croiront pas, probablement, qu'une personne qui a la vanité inouïe de vouloir se faire passer pour une femme de lettres, ait l'effronterie d'écrire sur elle-même des éloges les plus dégoûtants qu'elle fait insérer dans nos journaux, et que nos rédacteurs par espièglerie ont imprimés sous forme d'annonces. Avec tout le désir de ne pas interrompre l'entente cordiale entre les individus des deux nations, nous ne pouvons pas résister d'exposer la folie d'une 'précieuse ridicule,' encore plus absurde qu'aucune de celles dépeintes par Molière, et qui fait tort à son pays par son ignorance, et sa vanité extrême.*"

Selina read this insulting paragraph with as little emphasis as possible, wishing, as much as it was in her power, to diminish its force by a rapid perusal. The unfortunate person, however, to whom it was directed, felt every line, nay every

* "*Caldersfoot veut dire en Anglais Colderfeet; c'est à dire, pied plus froid.*"

word, as if a poniard had been forced into her breast, and writhed in agony under the infliction. No wounds inflicted on the body are so severely felt as those given to the vanity, and as Lady Caldersfoot's was most excessive and vulnerable, her sufferings were intense.

"The wretches! the monsters! the cowards!" exclaimed the enraged authoress between every sentence. "Yes, I see *my* enemies have bribed those of my country to attack me in this dastardly manner. But England will take it up, I feel persuaded. The Ambassador here will demand satisfaction of the Prime Minister. It will, doubtless, be made a national question; for England never will suffer itself to be outraged in the person of one of its brightest literary ornaments. Alas! this is one of the penalties of Fame; and I could weep bitter tears, that I, the lover of peace, whose writings have ever tended to humanize, and soften national asperities, should be the innocent cause of a war, in which thousands may be slain. Would that I could cheat myself into the hope that such fearful results may not follow; for I look down from the lofty eminence where my genius has elevated me, with contemptuous pity on such infamous attacks; and, were my country not wounded through me, I should receive them as new proofs of my superiority. What real genius, of this, or any age, has escaped the shafts of envy? Voltaire himself, whose writings some of mine are thought to resemble, had his Freron; and Pope his Curl and Dennis. You see how cool, how unmoved I am. Look at me, that you may hereafter remember how true genius meets the envenomed darts that seek to wound it."

Selina, as commanded, raised her eyes to the face of Lady Caldersfoot, but instantly turned them away, so much was she shocked by the change in it. Not all the *rouge* of that lady could conceal the livid paleness that bespread her visage. Her eyes flashed with anger, and her thin lips trembled.

"Yes, I am unmoved," repeated she, though her unsteady voice told a different tale, "quite unmoved, nay, glad; for this vile attack will draw the attention and excite the sympathy of all Europe."

The carriage was now announced, and Lady Caldersfoot, although tremulous with emotion, did not forget to cast an anxious glance at the mirror before which she stopped, laid

on some more *rouge*, and then descended to her carriage, affecting a composure that she was far from feeling, and which did not deceive Selina as to the real state of her mind.

"Poor woman," thought she, "how does she by her vanity embitter a life, that, without pretensions which have not even the basis of ordinary talent or education to found them on, and which, consequently, expose her to ridicule, might pass tranquilly, if not happily. She is, naturally, neither ill-natured nor unkind; but having taken the absurd fancy of becoming an authoress, without any one of the requisites for such a profession, she becomes vexed and angry by anything that militates against her ambition, and is either in a state of excitement, produced by the flatteries of those who mock her, or almost maddened by the severity of the truths of those who search to correct her folly."

In due time Lady Caldersfoot returned from the Tuileries.

"I have had a most kind reception," said she to Selina. "The King and Queen were most gracious to me. Both, with the greatest condescension, asked me how long I had been at Paris; hoped I liked it, and that I intended to make some stay. I ought to mention, that the distinguished gentleman who put up the steps and closed the door of my carriage the other day, was *not* the King, and, I now believe, could be no other than the Prime Minister. He certainly must be the next in authority to his Majesty, for there was a lofty grandeur in his air and manner that could only belong to some very remarkable person. When I found the King so amiable and kind to me, I took the liberty of telling him that my stay in France must depend on a stop being put to the shameful attacks published against me in the French newspapers, and I named the *Figaro* and the other papers."

"I regret, my lady," said his Majesty, "that anything could occur to occasion you pain; but let me advise you to treat such attacks as I do, — smile at them."

"I replied, that so I felt disposed to do; but that the dread I entertained of the insult to me being taken up as a national question by England, and leading to a war, alarmed me. His Majesty was, at that moment, seized by so violent a fit of coughing, that for some minutes he was obliged to keep his handkerchief to his face; and, to prove to you what courtiers the French are, no sooner did he cough, than all the circle

around him coughed too, and applied their handkerchiefs to their faces. But when his long fit of coughing had subsided, he kindly told me not to be alarmed, for that such was the perfect good understanding, the *entente cordiale*, as he said, between the two nations, that he hoped nothing would interrupt it; and then, I suppose, because his Majesty found that I might still further urge him, and that he felt he could not embroil himself with the press, he bowed, and moved on to speak to some one else in the circle. The Ambassadress appeared greatly embarrassed while I was speaking to the King. I conclude that she was afraid I might compromise the position of her husband, by declaring my intention of insisting on his interference. Indeed, her Excellency afterwards explained to me, that attacks in newspapers were, in France as in England, either left unnoticed, or the journalists were prosecuted for libels, and advised me particularly not to take any further step whatever in the affair."

"I trust your Ladyship will adopt such good advice," said Selina.

"I have not yet made up my mind. I am so perfectly mistress of repartee, and have such a facility of writing *piquant* and *tranchantes* things, that I should really like to answer those impertinent journalists, and prove to them that wit and raillery is not confined to France; and that if their country could boast a Madame de Sévigné, who excelled in the epistolary style, and a Madame Dacier, versed in erudition, England has women, at the head of whom I believe I may without vanity place myself, who need not yield the palm of excellence to France." Lady Caldersfoot drew herself up, and assumed an air of dignity. "I think," resumed she, "that it was rather strange that when the Ambassadress presented me, she never referred to my celebrity. I expected her Excellency would at least have said, 'I have the honour of presenting to his Majesty the King of the French, and to her Majesty the Queen, Lady Caldersfoot, the most celebrated of English authoresses.' But not a word of this was said, and I believe my position, as the head of English literature, would have not been known, had not the Prince de Joinville (oh! what a charming young man he is) whispered something in the ears of the King and Queen, which I feel confident produced that extreme kindness in their manner towards me; for which I

must feel for ever grateful. I am sure they did not address the same flattering words to any one else at the reception. Yes, I never can forget both the King and Queen condescending to ask me how long I had been in France, how I liked it, and how long I intended to stay, and then the friendly smiles which accompanied these kind questions. Yes, I may indeed well be proud of such flattering and gratifying attention from such a quarter. However, although the Ambassadress did not refer to my celebrity, the two young *attachés* (and most amiable and gifted young men they are) made it generally known, and the consequence was, that all eyes were turned on me. I saw my two young compatriots telling all their acquaintances who I was, as I could easily judge by the persons spoken to turning their glances on me. The Prince de Joinville, too, took great notice of me, and was most gracious. *Son Altesse Royale* even condescended to express his regret that I had not adhered to my English costume for court, because as, he was pleased to say he thought it so peculiarly elegant and becoming."

So ran on Lady Caldersfoot during the whole time that Selina was taking off her Court-dress, her eyes constantly fixed on the *Psyché* before which she stood, evidently perfectly pleased by her own appearance, and the effect she believed it had produced, and meditating future *succès* in the French capital, the recollection of the annoyance of the morning lost in the pleasure so lately received at the *Tuileries*.

"Well," thought Selina, "if vanity often furnishes sources of mortification acutely felt, it must be owned that the salve applied by its own credulity, soon heals the wound." And as she made this reflection, she felt her pity for her foolish mistress degenerate into a sentiment much more akin to contempt.

Lady Caldersfoot imagined that having been presented at court, and having appeared at a *soirée* at the English Embassy, she should find herself sought after by the most distinguished persons in the Parisian world of literature and fashion. But when, after a few days of hope deferred, and that her expectations were disappointed, her anger became aroused, and she vented her mortification in bitter comments on the envy and jealousy of the Parisians, who could so neglect

a woman whose presence in their capital conferred honour on them and it.

"Talk of *l'entente cordiale*," would she say to Selina "it 's all a pretence. If the French *really* wished to preserve it, would they have missed an opportunity of conciliating and marking their respect for England and the English, by showing every possible attention to *me*? My enemies have, I know, taken active steps to prevent my receiving the homage due to me here; nevertheless, they could not have so completely succeeded, had not the jealousy of the French aided their malice." A dinner given at the Tuileries to some distinguished individuals of the English aristocracy, and to which her Ladyship was not commanded, achieved her total discomfiture. That the King and Queen could after so flattering a reception, leave *her* out at a dinner given to some of her compatriots, was a slight not to be overlooked. There must be something more than met the eye in such a grave insult, and she deemed it a duty due to herself to ascertain the cause.

A long letter was forthwith written to the Ambassadress, requesting to be made acquainted with the motive for such an unprecedented instance of neglect, and offence offered to a person whose celebrity *must* be so well-known, and who merited a very different treatment. The answer, although written with all the tact, good-breeding, and kindness which ever characterized the Ambassadress, and which rendered her Ladyship so beloved at Paris, failed to satisfy Lady Caldersfoot. That the invitations, or rather the commands to the Tuileries emanated entirely from the court, and could not be interfered in by ambassadors — Lady Caldersfoot found it difficult to believe; and that any remonstrance addressed to Royalty on such a subject (as her Ladyship threatened to write,) would be deemed most indecorous and improper, she could hardly be brought to admit. A disagreeable correspondence with the Ambassadress was the result, and Lady Caldersfoot determined on no longer prolonging her sojourn in a capital where genius and celebrity were so little appreciated.

The evening of the day on which this resolution was adopted, a command to a concert at the Tuileries considerably mollified her Ladyship's anger; and although, when

she returned from it, she told Selina that no less than three hundred persons had been present, she persisted in asserting, that to be invited to concerts at the palace, was a much greater distinction than to be engaged to dinner. His Majesty, too, had not only smiled very graciously to her, but had, quite in a confidential way, remarked on the heat of the room; and the Queen had in the most amiable manner inquired if she were fond of music? "I feel persuaded," added Lady Caldersfoot, "that their Majesties having been informed of my passion for music, (a pretension Selina had never previously heard her mistress advance,) they gave the concert in compliment to *me*," and this belief soothed her wounded vanity so much, that her temper recovered its tone, she spoke in terms of the highest eulogium of the Royal family, and wrote accounts to London for insertion in the papers, of the distinguished favour shown her at the Tuileries.

The change of air had so much benefitted the health of Selina, that she no longer desired to remain on the continent unless she could obtain a situation with a more rational, and less ridiculous mistress, than her present one. She shrank in dismay, from the *exposés* to which Lady Caldersfoot was continually subjecting herself, and was tired, beyond endurance, by the daily, nay, hourly, self-laudations of her Ladyship, as well as by her absurd schemes for extending a celebrity that existed only in her own weak brain. To accompany her to the South of France and Italy, would be, Selina felt, to expose herself to a series of annoyances, which she had not courage to encounter; and yet, as with all her faults and follies, Lady Caldersfoot had always treated her with civility, she hesitated to leave her in a foreign land.

"I hope you employ the time not occupied in my personal service, in making notes that may be useful for my work," said her mistress. "Write down your reflections likewise; for, as Mirabeau turned the notes furnished by Dupont to account, I can convert yours into passages of such profound thought and brilliant diction, that you never could imagine that mere common-place remarks could have suggested them. Be assured, that genius is the true Midas, whose touch turns all to gold, as I will prove to you if you write notes."

The proprietor of the hotel and his wife had, from the

commencement of Lady Caldersfoot's *séjour* in their house, treated Selina with the utmost kindness and attention. They soon discovered her superiority to the subordinate place she filled, and as quickly observed the follies of her mistress, and pitied a well educated person, who was subjected to a daily endurance of them. Many comforts, for which no charge was made to Lady Caldersfoot, were provided for Selina; not the least of which was the loan of books, that agreeably filled up her solitary hours. Selina was one day descending the stairs to return some of the books lent to her, when the tones of a well-remembered voice struck on her ear. She paused, turned round to look on the speaker, and recognised the kind, the beautiful, Mrs. Fraser, and one of her sisters. Overjoyed, she approached them, and, no sooner had Mrs. Fraser caught a view of her face, than she ran and embraced her, exclaiming, "Dear, good, Selina! — how delighted I am to see you! Do come into my apartment;" and seizing the hand of Selina, she drew, rather than led her into one of the *salons* of a very handsome suite of rooms, where Mrs. Herbert and her other daughter were occupied writing at a table. Nothing could exceed the kindness of the reception she met with from that excellent woman and her unmarried daughters; while from Mrs. Fraser, a more affectionate one could not be given by a sister. They had arrived from the South of France only the previous evening, *en route* for England, where they were returning sooner then they had intended, owing to Miss Herbert's being on the eve of marriage with a young English nobleman, with whom they had become acquainted during their travels.

"All the work of this dear, dear creature," said Mrs. Herbert, imprinting a kiss on the brow of Mrs. Fraser, "who has bestowed a fortune on her sisters that renders them eligible matches for those whose parents might otherwise make objections that probably could not be got over."

"No, no, dear mother. Be assured Lord Gulstone would have gladly married dear Emma had she been portionless, and *his* parents love him too well to have offered any obstacle to his wishes."

"Just like you, dearest, always trying to make light of the good you do," said the fond mother, her eyes beaming with tenderness.

"And who are you with here, my good Selina?" inquired Mrs. Fraser. "How glad I am that we are in the same house." When informed that Selina was living with Lady Caldersfoot, Mrs. Herbert shook her head: "Poor Lady Caldersfoot!" said she; "I knew her very well some years ago. I hope she is not still searching after celebrity and acquiring only notoriety. But I should have said poor *Selina*, instead of poor Lady Caldersfoot, for, unless her Ladyship is greatly changed indeed, Selina cannot have a comfortable place."

"Then she *must* come to me," interrupted Mrs. Fraser, taking Selina's hand. "You look pale and languid, my dear girl; indeed you do. Ah! I knew, when I saw the terrible event announced in the English papers, what you would feel, and often and often did I think of you, and wish to know where to write to you, to ask you to come to me. There, don't weep, dear Selina, for if you have lost one friend you have still an older, and a most attached one, hasn't she mother?"

"Yes, four friends," replied Mrs. Herbert, "for never can your sisters or I forget what a comfort she was to you and to me, when we required her kindness."

"But do, dear Selina, arrange to come to me, and return to England with us. I will transfer my present *Femme de Chambre* to Emma on her marriage, and you will always stay with me, won't you?"

Selina found it difficult to tear herself away from her kind friends, and before she left them was obliged to promise to let them see her as frequently as possible, and to make arrangements for leaving Lady Caldersfoot and returning with them to England. When she had reached the door Mrs. Fraser called her back, and said, "Oh! I forgot to ask you what was the good you derived from a certain Messrs. Scott and Murray, solicitors in Lincolns-Inn-Fields, who advertised, that if Miss Selina Stratfort, lately living with the deceased Duchess of Glenallen, would apply to them, or furnish her address, she would hear of something greatly to her advantage. My mother cut out the advertisement."

"Yes," observed Mrs. Herbert, "and here it is;" drawing it forth from her writing-desk. "I thought it just possible that you might not see it, so kept it to show you when we met."

"I never saw or heard of it," replied Selina. "Probably the advantage held out is the balance of salary due to me by

my late beloved mistress, which I never thought of since the terrible catastrophe that deprived me of her;" and Selina's eyes filled with tears, as they always did whenever she reverted to the death of the Duchess.

"You should, however, write to the solicitors at once," said Mrs. Herbert, "and I will forward your letter with mine by this post."

In due time an answer was received from Messrs. Scott and Murray, stating that their late client, the Duchess of Glenallen, had, in consideration of Miss Stratford's faithful services to her, and to mark her regard, bequeathed her the sum of five thousand pounds, with a portrait of her Grace, a large collection of books, some trinkets, and the whole of her wardrobe. Although nearly overpowered by contending emotions at finding herself now blessed with a competency that would preclude her henceforth from servitude, this noble generosity of a mistress, whose loss she had never ceased to deplore, touched her feelings so deeply, that it was long ere she could think of aught but that beautiful and beneficent being, consigned to a premature grave.

Mrs. Fraser, and her mother and sisters, were overjoyed beyond measure at the good fortune of one whom they so highly valued. Not so was Lady Caldersfoot, who, when apprised of the fact, acknowledged that *she* had read the advertisement the day after Selina had entered her service, but that fearful of the possibility of losing so useful a companion for her travels, had concealed the circumstance from her *femme de chambre:* proving that self, and self alone, was ever thought of by her. She added, that this unexpected accession of fortune would be a very striking incident in a novel, and that she would certainly make use of it.

"You should rejoice that I kept the secret," continued her Ladyship, "since you may now boast of having approached my person in the most confidential manner; an honour which, from my great celebrity, will reflect much more distinction on you, than if you had served Royalty itself."

Selina returned to England with Mrs. Fraser; engaged a little cottage close to the beautiful Villa near Richmond, purchased by that lady; where, surrounded by the books so often perused aloud to her departed benefactress, and with her portrait placed in her little parlour, where it is never

looked at without grateful emotion, she passes her life tranquilly; a day seldom goes by without Mrs. Fraser or her sister dropping in to cheer her solitude. It is said that the curate of a neighbouring parish, a young man highly esteemed, is soon to become the husband of Selina, who, we hope, will, as a happy wife, forget the trials to wich she was exposed as a Governess and FEMME DE CHAMBRE.

THE END.

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